DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 377 125 SO 024 600

AUTHOR McDiarmid, G. Williamson; Vinten-Johansen, Peter
TITLE The Teaching and Learning of History--From the Inside Out. NCRTL Special Report.
INSTITUTION National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, East Lansing, MI.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO ISSN-1054-7673
PUB DATE Nov 93
NOTE 46p.
AVAILABLE FROM Michigan State University, National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, College of Education, 116 Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824-1034 ($8.10).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Higher Education; *Historiography; *History; *History Instruction; *Learning Strategies; *Teacher Education; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

This document comprising of two essays, "Challenging Prospective Teachers' Understandings of History" (G. Williamson McDiarmid) and "Reflections of a Journeyman Historian" (Peter Vinten-Johansen), provides a uniquely detailed account of what students study and learn in a historiography course. The course described is unusual in its attention to the epistemological issues stressed in emerging curriculum standards. These papers give vivid impressions of what this course meant to both students and professor. These impressions, combined with the evidence about what students learned, begin to suggest how one might understand the substance and sources of subject matter knowledge of teachers in several fields. The papers do not suggest an easy solution, but do provoke reflection on what the current reforms ask of teachers, and what is reasonable to expect those teachers to know. The first paper describes the study of an undergraduate historiography course, the historiography seminar on the Spanish Armada, and a rationale for the workshop approach to history. It includes dialogue from students and a table of components of the history workshop and corresponding understandings of history that the experiences are designed to develop. Students' thinking about history is discussed. The second article by Vinten-Johansen gains added interest by describing not only the instructor's perspective on the course, but also his account of how he came to teach a course with this focus. The first article contains 42 references. (DK)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 377 125

The Teaching and Learning of History -- From the Inside Out

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
M. KENNEDY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SO 024 600

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NCRTL price $8.10

NCRTL

NCRTL Special Report

The Teaching and Learning of History—From the Inside Out

by G. Williamson McDiarmid and Peter Vinten-Johansen

G. Williamson McDiarmid, co-director of the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning and associate professor of Teacher Education at Michigan State University, taught history and social studies for nine years—and has been trying to figure out where he went wrong ever since. His other research focuses on prospective English teachers' understanding of literature and teaching literature to diverse learners.

Peter Vinten-Johansen is an associate professor in history and the Center for Ethics and Humanities in the Life Sciences at Michigan State University. He has been the Director for Interdisciplinary Programs in Health and Humanities in the College of Arts and Letters at MSU since 1989. His major teaching responsibilities lie in modern European history, particularly intellectual history; and the history of health care in the United States and western Europe. He has an interest in ethnohistory and, of course, in the interaction of history and pedagogy as subject matters and practice.

Introduction

One of the most striking findings of the Teacher Education and Learning to Teach study was that majoring in a subject such as mathematics or English did not always provide the subject matter understanding needed for teaching. Graduates might have the knowledge needed for success on course examinations, yet not be able to explain a basic concept or to make connections outside those courses. Graduates also often viewed disciplinary knowledge as given and absolute, contrary to the historical record and to contemporary philosophical commentaries.

These findings remind us that to understand teacher learning we must look beyond the typical research sites—education courses and field experience. Because college courses in the arts and sciences offer prospective teachers a major opportunity to learn about the subjects they will teach, insight into the sources of teachers' subject matter knowledge requires examination of these courses.

Although research has been done on the effects of college, studies of how college students learn and how they are taught are principally general accounts of the college

experience or anecdotal reports of college instruction. Our understanding of what college graduates know is also limited—based on test data on selected groups (e.g., GRE examinees) and interview studies of science and mathematics students, which typically highlight the gap between test scores and understanding. Thus, little is known about how college does or does not provide teachers with the deep subject matter understanding that seems required for increasingly challenging achievement standards.

In the two essays that comprise this special report, G. Williamson McDiarmid and Peter Vinton-Johansen provide a uniquely detailed account of what students study and learn in a historiography course—a history course about the doing of history. The course described here is unusual in its attention to the epistemological issues stressed in emerging curriculum standards. Vinton-Johansen's paper thus gains added interest by describing not only the instructor's perspective on the course, but also his account of how he came to teach a course with this focus.

These papers give vivid impressions of what this course means to both students and professor. These impressions, combined with the evidence about what students learned, begin to suggest how we might understand the substance and sources of subject matter knowledge of teachers in several fields. The papers do not suggest a quick fix; they do provoke reflection on what the current reforms ask of teachers and what is reasonable to expect those teachers to know. By extending the work reported here over time and to other subjects, McDiarmid, Vinten-Johansen, and their colleagues are helping to strengthen our understanding of how teachers learn what they have to teach.

Robert E. Floden

Co-Director

National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

Challenging Prospective Teachers' Understandings of History

G. Williamson McDiarmid

United States reform initiatives in teacher education call for teachers to develop subject matter knowledge that is broader, deeper, and more connected than is currently the case (Holmes Group, 1986). Policymakers, eager to ensure that prospective teachers learn as much subject matter knowledge as possible, have, in a number of states, either restricted the number of teacher education courses that prospective teachers may take or by-passed university-based teacher education altogether. Restrictions on the number of teacher education courses expresses the policymakers' belief that to increase the subject matter knowledge of prospective teachers, they should spend more time in arts and science courses. After all, arts and science courses, rather than teacher education courses, have been the traditional source of subject matter knowledge.

The assumption that prospective teachers will learn more of the subject matter knowledge they will need for teaching by taking more arts and science courses is, however, largely unexamined. Although researchers have studied, from a variety of angles, the effects of university education on students (for a comprehensive review, see (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), the teaching *and* learning of specific subject matter—particularly history—at university remains largely unexamined. We actually know little about the effects of arts and science courses on how students think about subject matter—what they believe the subject matter to be, how new knowledge in the field is generated and evaluated, what the major controversies in the field are and why, and so on. Certainly, like teachers at other levels, university faculty collect and analyze, usually informally, data on their students' learning. But much of what these faculty have learned remains tacit and uncommunicated (for examples to the contrary, see Booth, 1988, and Smith, 1990).

In this paper, I examine a required undergraduate history course and the thinking of students in the course as a way to begin addressing the gap in our collective understanding of teaching and learning in arts and science courses. In describing the course, I identify the purposes the organization and structure of the course appear to serve, as well as the views of history that permeate these purposes. I then discuss the kinds of understandings students seemed to develop during and after the course and speculate on the role that the experience of the course may have had on these understandings. Finally, I compare these kinds of understandings with the recommendations of reformers.

Description of the Study

The undergraduate historiography course as the object of study

In selecting a course to study, we were primarily concerned to identify one that seemed likely to bring students face to face with critical epistemological questions in the field such as what is historical knowledge and how is it produced and validated. Such understandings underlie many of the curricular and pedagogical decisions history teachers make. We were interested both in how prospective teachers thought about such questions as well as in how history instructors treated them. We were also interested in how students thought about such

epistemological questions under *promising* circumstances—a "best case." Consequently, we wanted to choose an instructor who had a reputation as a successful pedagogue. Finally, we wanted a required course—one considered critical for all students that is typically taken early in students' sequence of courses. This latter stipulation was important because we wanted to be able to follow the students for at least a year to see how their thinking developed subsequently. This was posited on our belief that the ideas whose development we were interested in tracking were difficult and required some time to comprehend.

A section of the required undergraduate historiography course offered by the History Department at Michigan State University and taught by Professor Peter Vinten-Johansen met all of these criteria. After a brief career as a high school government teacher and a stint in the Navy, Vinten-Johansen did graduate work in history at Yale. He has taught at Michigan State University for 15 years (For an autobiographical account of Vinten-Johansen's development as a teacher, see Vinten-Johansen, in press.).

Vinten-Johansen taught the section of the course taken by students in the Honors College at Michigan State University. Consequently, some of the students were likely to be highly motivated and had achieved considerable success in their past experiences with history both in high school and in college. Others in the course were not Honors College students. According to Vinten-Johansen, in all essential respects the course was similar in organization, procedures, and pedagogy to other, non-honors courses he teaches. The presence of the Honors College students, for our purposes, enhanced its qualifications as a "best case" test of the idea that arts and science courses could enable students—including prospective teachers—to develop deep and connected understandings of the subject matter.

Of the twenty students who started the seminar, 16 completed it. Of the 14 students for whom we have baseline data, eight were third-year students, two second-year, and four first-year. The students had taken an average of two history courses prior to the historiography seminar; three of the third-year students had taken as many as four courses. Although they had taken no previous college-level history courses, two of the first-year students had taken Advanced Placement American History courses in high school. The courses students had previously taken were, by and large, survey courses taught in large lecture formats with weekly discussion sections taught by graduate students. The most common survey course taken was the two-term sequence in American History. All but three of the students were history majors. Eight of the original 14 planned to teach high school history after graduation.

Description of the data on teaching

We documented the opportunities that students in the course had to learn, the instructor's rationale for the purposes and opportunities he orchestrated, as well as students' understandings of critical ideas over time. To document opportunities to learn, I attended and took notes on all but 2 of 19 meetings of the seminar. I also made tape recordings of the class (subsequently transcribed), interviewed the instructor formally twice, tape recorded the instructor's conferences with the students, and collected course documents and copies of the instructor's comments on students' written work.

I conducted two formal interviews with the instructor as well as several informal conversations about the course and specific students. The first structured interview focused on the instructor's rationale for the course, the sequence of activities, the texts, the assignments, and so on. The second interview focused

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

on his assessment of how much progress students made toward the goals he had set for them. In this interview, we returned to some of the themes of the earlier interview such as the purpose of various activities and texts.

In taking field notes, I focused on the classroom discourse, the issues that were discussed and how these were related to prior and subsequent issues or questions, the roles of various participants in the discussion, the kinds of questions asked and explanations offered, and other ways in which history was represented.

Description of the data on student learning

Students' written work constitutes another source of data, both on the teaching of the course and on student understanding. When possible, I collected the papers the students wrote for the course. These papers included Professor Vinten-Johansen's marginal and summary comments. Consequently, the papers represent evidence of student understanding, opportunities the instructor created for students to learn, goals and purposes of the instructor, and the instructor's ideas about history and about knowing and doing history.

We conducted at least two and in some cases three structured interviews with each of the 11 students who remained in the sample over the first year of the study. The interviews consist of three sections. The first section focuses on students' past experience with learning social studies and history both inside and outside of school. In the second section, we asked students about specific historical events and issues: the causes and consequences of the Civil War, as well as specific events and people associated with these issues; the meaning of Reconstruction; highlights and results of the civil rights movement, as well as, again, events and people from the movement; and the Tonkin Bay Resolution in relation to the war in Vietnam. We chose these topics because they are commonly found in most high school history courses and textbooks and they are topics on which historians have offered a variety of interpretations. We sought to find out not only what students knew, factually and contextually, about these events, but also how they thought historians construct accounts of these events and what historians might find problematic in conducting historical inquiries. We also presented students with conflicting interpretations of a historical period—Reconstruction—and asked them which account they preferred and why and how historians could produce such a range of interpretations for the same set of events. The third section focuses on the same historical events and issues that appeared in the second, but the questions focus on how the students would teach these topics to eighth and eleventh graders. We also asked them to critique sections from two textbooks on the Civil War and the civil rights movement. We chose these particular textbooks to represent both dull and more engaging texts as defined by a recent review of history textbooks (Sewall, 1987).

Data analysis

I analyzed the data on teaching—especially the interviews with the instructor and the transcriptions of the course meetings—for evidence on several dimensions of the instructor's knowledge and purpose. One dimension was the instructor's ideas about what history is and what it means to know history. A second dimension was the instructor's goals and purposes for the historiography course. Closely related is a third dimension: the way that the instructor represented history through the organization, sequencing, and discourse of the seminar, as well as through the texts, assignments, and activities. Finally, I analyzed the data for evidence of the instructor's assumptions about what his students believe about history and learning and knowing history.

I entered the data from the student interviews into a database that allowed me to sort them along several dimensions and to compare their responses to each of the items at the beginning of the course and then one year later. For this analysis, I examined students' responses on

three dimensions of knowledge: the nature of history, the "doing" of history, and the teaching and learning of history. Beginning with the full transcripts of the interviews, I reduced the data on each dimension for each student to a summary with illustrative quotations and then to a summary. I then looked for patterns across the individual summaries.

Problems with the study

Case studies of this type do not produce generalizable findings. The study was designed to serve several other purposes. First, I explore the relationship between a practicing historian's views of the nature of history and historical inquiry and the opportunities he orchestrates to enable undergraduates, some of whom are prospective teachers, to develop understandings about history and historical method that are closer to those of historians. Concomitantly, I also examine how students make sense out of an experience of learning history that contrasts with those they have previously encountered and what, if any, changes seem to occur in their knowledge and thinking about history over time.

Although I cannot draw conclusions about undergraduate history teaching and learning on the basis of these data, this is not my purpose. Rather, I describe and analyze the relationships among the instructor's views of history, the experiences he orchestrates for his students, and the evolving historical understandings of prospective teachers and other undergraduates. Currently, few detailed descriptions or analyses of these phenomena and their relationships are available to historians or teacher educators. Yet, just such investigations are needed if we are to begin to understand the relationship between various approaches to teaching and the kinds of understandings students develop when involved with these approaches. I hope this paper spurs interest in, discussion of, and more investigation of these issues.

Description of the Historiography Seminar

The case

The centerpiece of the historiography seminar is a puzzle: What is an apparently obscure seventeenth century dispute over a seat in Parliament between two Englishmen—one named Goodwin and the other Fortescue—about and why should anyone care? Although Professor Vinten-Johansen described the course as consisting of three "chunks" and the Goodwin-Fortescue controversy as the second "chunk," the other two "chunks" are, in fact, intended to aid students in their investigations into the case. During the first three weeks, students analyze Garrett Mattingly's (1959) classic account of the English defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 and then compare Mattingly's account with Fernandez-Armesto's (1988) revisionist analysis of the event. In the third chunk, students read G. R. Elton's *England Under the Tudors* (1974) and Joyce Youings's *The Sixteenth Century* (1984) and lead seminar discussions on portions of these texts.

The history workshop portion of the seminar commenced with the distribution of "the packet"—a collection of primary documents relating to the Goodwin-Fortescue dispute—during the eighth class meeting, or one-third of the way through the course. Consisting of some 46 single-spaced typed pages, the packet contains various documents that bear on the case: court accounts of events in the case; reports of the dispute in Parliament from the journal of the House of Commons and private diaries kept by Members; various state papers; correspondence between James I, the recently installed and first Stuart monarch, and the House of Commons; letters written by Members; and correspondence among diplomats. (In our first interview, Professor Vinten-Johansen quickly acknowledged that the idea for the packet and the packet itself are products of Professor Jack Hexter, with whom Vinten-Johansen studied as a graduate student at Yale in the 1970s.)

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

The students' first task was to order the documents chronologically and by source. Simple, but for the fact that, as the students discovered, England was, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, on a different calendar (Julian) from the Catholic states of the continent (Gregorian). Immediately, then, students encountered a problem in accomplishing what appears to be the most straightforward task historians undertake: establishing the temporal order of events.

Subsequently, Professor Vinten-Johansen divided the class of 20 students into two types of groups. The first type consisted of four or five students apparently randomly assigned to each group. The second type was topic-specific. During the ninth class meeting, Vinten-Johansen worked with the class to identify topics on which they would need additional information if they were to make sense of the documents and, ultimately, the case itself. The topics for research identified included: biographical information on the principals in the case; organization of the government and the elections process; legal terminology; and the social structure of England at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

In their topic-groups, students were responsible for collaboratively deciding what information they needed to sort out the case, finding the information in books that Vinten-Johansen had put on reserve in the library or other sources they found for themselves, and finding information about their topic that classmates in their primary group requested. The information students gathered as part of their topic-specific group was reported back to their classmates in their primary group. In these groups, students pooled their information and understandings in an effort to make sense of the controversy.

Out of these collaborative efforts emerged the research papers that each student wrote. The first draft of these papers was due after the thirteenth class meeting, some four weeks after the packet had been introduced. After receiving Vinten-Johansen's comments and meeting individually with him to discuss their drafts, students turned in a second draft in lieu of a conventional final examination.

The Armada

Before receiving the packet on the Goodwin-Fortescue case, students read two accounts of the battle between the English fleet and the Spanish Armada in 1588. Vinten-Johansen from the beginning focused classroom discussions of Mattingly on the purpose for which he wrote *The Armada*. During the second class meeting, students reacted to Mattingly's characterization, in his preface to the 1959 edition, of the battle in the English Channel as part of an "ideological war." Several students objected that he seemed to ignore other possible reasons for the conflict, such as economics and burgeoning nationalism. Responding to these suggestions, Vinten-Johansen channeled the discussion, mid-way through the class, to the context in which Mattingly wrote:

> Mattingly is writing in a time [*The Armada* was originally conceived in 1940] in which this ideological struggle is going on and so, therefore, in his mind even though economics may be an issue, even though nationalism may be an issue—in his mind, this ideological . . . conflict going on in the 1940s is causing him to go back and look at an earlier period of time. . . . Do you think that is wrong? He is in a way imposing something from the present onto past. Why? What does that mean? What does that say about history?

After a student responds that "you can never have completely unbiased history," Vinten-Johansen agrees that as human beings "come from different backgrounds and experiences" they will write biased history. The remainder of the class—and much of the subsequent discussion about *The Armada*—focused on Mattingly's thesis.

Discussions of Fernandez-Armesto's account of the Armada similarly focused on identifying his thesis and the evidence on which he based this argument. From the beginning, however, students used Mattingly's account as the standard against which to judge Fernandez-Armesto's thesis. Discussions explored differences in the types of evidence on which the two historians base their arguments, particularly Fernandez-Armesto's detailed account of the ordnance each side had at their disposal.

Toward the end of the third class on Fernandez-Armesto—the seventh class meeting—debate on his argument reached its peak. Several students had contended that a critical element of Fernandez-Armesto's argument is his contention that the English and Spanish were more evenly matched than they had previously been portrayed and that characterizing the battle as the English "David" defeating the Spanish "Goliath" misrepresented what actually occurred.

Kathy: I don't think [Fernandez-Armesto] says they were equal. I think he says Spain won.

PVJ: OK, do you, do you—

Gary: I think he says it right here on page 236 when he says "the deficiencies of Spanish strategy above all, as I have suggested, the failure to provide a northern port of refuge bears some responsibility for the Armada's failure. The English made a contribution of sorts to their own salvation, the weather did much of the rest, but the Armada would still have been reckoned a remarkably successful venture but for the work of the Irish siren." . . . I think that's such a stupid thing to say. . . . How can he claim success—just success that they made it out of there? I mean, that wouldn't have made it a successful voyage.

David: I'll take a shot. I think that he was arguing that they could claim success because [Fernandez-] Armesto mentions early in the book that, really, possibly, the main purpose behind the Armada might have been just to end English provocation and not so much, you know, the success and the total invasion. So I think that in those terms, that argument stands up a lot more strongly.

Gary: Well, I know he says that maybe they didn't plan to invade and maybe they just went to scare the English into doing something. But, I mean, how can you consider all the time that they spent as being successful and nothing really happened to the English?

Kara: I would argue against that because I think what I got from what he's saying . . . that the Spanish were successful because they were able to keep most of their ships together and the English weren't really able to sink them or really harm them in any way. Most of their problems came from the weather and not having enough food and the English didn't accomplish their goal of destroying the Armada.

Gary: But how's that successful when the Spanish were on the offensive?

Dick: But it's not thinking like winning or losing—the Spanish were defeated, or the English didn't succeed because they couldn't destroy the Armada and the Spanish succeeded because the English weren't able to. It's not like win or lose.

Gary: I think that's a cop out to say that—

PVJ: Jump in, Sean.

Sean: That's what I was thinking too. . . . I mean, why call it the Armada? Why not call it like a "little sailing fleet?" Just for the heck of it, they went out and sailed. . . . If that's all they wanted to do, why do they go to all the trouble? . . . If it's all just going to be some type of feint to quell England's provocation into Spanish territory or anything like that, they didn't have to go to such extremes to do that, probably. And all they did was go up there and sail around and then get a couple of ships lost and . . . I don't see it as a Spanish victory.

PVJ: You do not?

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

Curt: This assumption's ridiculous because . . . I read at the beginning how [Fernandez-Armesto] said the only reason for the Armada was possibly to get bargaining power over the English. Well they certainly didn't. I mean, the English think that they won. So, I mean, it's not like the English were beaten up and said, "Well, at least we got them out of here." I mean, the English didn't get touched at all and got them out of there. So, I mean, Spain really has no bargaining power. If they came back, I mean, maybe the weather would change but England seemed [stronger]. . . . [Fernandez-Armesto] is not looking at it . . . from the English point of view. But to me, the English seemed that they know that they won and they're not going to bargain.

Diane: I have to admit that I agree that the Spanish lost it, but I don't think by that much because . . . the Spanish only lost like four or five ships. . . . After the battle, I mean, the weather took out most of the ships. And I think maybe [Fernandez-Armesto] is suggesting that Philip was just testing his power against the English and they got up there and they got in a fight and they came out a lot better than maybe Philip thought that they would come out and then that way it was a victory and then that way maybe if the ships would have been able to get down back through the channel and back to Spain and they could have improved it, gone back up, challenged the English again and won.

Curt: What I don't understand is if he's arguing that Spain was the victor in this battle, why didn't they have the guts to come back down the channel to go home?

PVJ: They couldn't; it was not a matter of guts, the wind was—

Kathy: Why didn't Spain turn around and attack, attack the English? Why didn't, if they were the victors, you know, why didn't they, why didn't they do something to England? They had to sail all the way back to Spain and then say, "Ha-ha, we won."

This exchange illustrates the kinds of conversations that took place around the Mattingly and Fernandez-Armesto texts. Nine of the 18 students present took part in this particular exchange. Professor Vinten-Johansen's role was minimal—indeed, when he tried to interject information into the discussion, Kathy interrupted him to make her point. This exchange could also be examined for evidence of student understanding: Students evidenced a capacity not only to identify the thesis of a historical account but also the capacity to critique the evidential and logical basis for the thesis. Lest the reader conclude that this type of conversation is possible because this was a Honors section, I would add that five of the nine students involved in this exchange were *not* in the Honors program.

Context for the packet

The third "chunk" of the course consists of two other texts: G. R. Elton's *England Under the Tudors* and Joyce Youings's *Sixteenth Century England*. Whereas discussions of Mattingly and Fernandez-Armesto had focused on the arguments they make and the evidential bases of their arguments, these two texts were treated as sources of information that would help students interpret the Goodwin-Fortescue case. Vinten-Johansen assigned each student a chapter from one of the books on which to make a presentation to the seminar and lead a discussion. The presenter was responsible for answering questions that classmates might have about the topic.

Papers

Students wrote three short papers and a longer research paper on the Goodwin-Fortescue case. The short papers included an analytical review of Mattingly's *The Armada*, an analytical review comparing Mattingly's account with that of Fernandez-Armesto, and a revision of the later. These written assignments were distinguished by two features: Vinten-Johansen treated all papers as drafts and review of the papers was an occasion for him to meet with individual students and discuss their progress. For instance, Vinten-Johansen required students to turn in a first draft of their research papers after the thirteenth class meeting and a second draft at the time set aside for the final examination.

The short papers, like the classroom discussions, required the students to attend to historical arguments and the bases for these. For instance, in the first paper, students had to identify Mattingly's thesis in *The Armada* and the logical and evidential foundation for his thesis. The comparative essay required students to compare the theses and the substantiations of the two authors. Vinten-Johansen wrote extensive comments both in the margins and on separate sheets of paper. The example below is typical of the comments Vinten-Johansen wrote on a first draft comparative essay, submitted after the ninth class meeting:

> *Opening paragraph is one of your most clearly written to date, Dick. Need to flesh it out more, however, from your personal orientation to each of the author's major theses and your final integration. Also need more analysis (where I write "because...") especially concerning which (or both) of the arguments you consider persuasive.*
>
> *Substantiation needs reorganization. The first paragraph has far too many topics. Reduce the number of paragraphs, then discuss M[attingly]'s view vs. F[ernandez]-A[rmesto]'s view and explain why you consider F[ernandez]-A[rmesto]'s more reasonable. You point out different perspectives and simply choose the one you like. Rough transition to Mattingly. In the next long paragraph; your organizational logic is unclear. We'll need to think of ways to help you set this up in the revision.*
>
> *Throughout, you need clearer explanation of the standards you employ for determining "better," etc. There's a difference between a particular perspective on the Armada and a clearer, more persuasive explanation. The key to that comes in your thesis, the analytical part especially.*

The five-page paper on which this comment appears contained an additional 15 comments or questions.

Conferences

Another critical experience in the course was the required conferences that Vinten-Johansen held with individual students about their papers. Although these conferences focused on the student's written work, they usually involved the themes that recurred in the classroom discussions. Students signed up for appointments on a schedule Vinten-Johansen brought to class. As Vinten-Johansen afforded 15 minutes for each conference, the discussions tended to be sharply focused. Limiting conferences to a quarter of an hour each made this a manageable component of the course for Vinten-Johansen, who had considerable administrative responsibilities in addition to teaching and research.

Below is an excerpt from the conference that he had after he returned Dick's paper with the comment recorded above:

PVJ: So you're stacking the deck against Mattingly.

Dick: I guess so. I didn't think, I thought Fernandez [-Armesto] was better, that's why I guess.

PVJ: Yea, okay, but, "better?" What's "better?"

Dick: A more persuasive. . .

PVJ: Why?

Dick: 'Cause of the way he, umm, examined the Armada itself.

PVJ: Because you liked it more?

Dick: Not really. When I read it I didn't like it as much. I kind of felt like he was ripping off the English. But then I thought at the end he did a better job.

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

PVJ: Okay, now what we need to do is get that word "better" out of there and come up with something where we can really compare the writing. In other words, we've got to compare the two theses. Then, unless there is a problem with the way in which Mattingly sets up the notion of the larger conflict . . .

Dick: The narrative?

PVJ: No. . . you say here, "In his book, Mattingly does not examine the Armada with its real goal in mind." You're telling the reader that Mattingly's got it screwed up. Instead of focusing on the "real goal" which you've set up here, to essentially invade England . . . you're saying that Mattingly's gone off on a tangent. He's all concerned about . . . the Armada's role within the larger crusade. . . . There's absolutely no doubt in your mind that that's the case?

Dick: Well, when you put it that way I'm not sure, but the way he set up France and the Netherlands, and what was happening in Spain, what was happening in England, I think that's, and then he just fit the Armada in to it.

PVJ: Okay. What do you have, do you have any standard by which you can judge which one is the real goal, which one is closest to coming up with the real goal? . . . Other than yourself and how you feel about it?

Dick: Yea, I think, the documents that Fernandez-Armesto used.

PVJ: What about the documents that Mattingly used?

Dick: I think they both said, kind of said the same thing.

PVJ: Okay, what, how did you decide what was the real goal? . . . You're convinced that the real goal, the actual mission, the real goal was to make this crossing, to assist in the crossing. What, tell me precisely, what evidence caused you to arrive at that conclusion?

Dick: I can't remember that exact thing from the book, but the way he said to meet Parma.

PVJ: Okay, but whose goal was that? Is this something that Mattingly or Fernandez-Armesto invented?

Dick: Phillip's goal.

PVJ: Okay, so what . . . is imbedded in here, but not clear yet, is that you're going to evaluate the two authors in terms of, at least initially, how well each one reconstructs Phillip's goal back then, in 1587-88. And then how the rest of this story that they tell whether or not it seems to carry out Phillip's goal or whether they wander off. What you're suggesting is, Phillip II's true goal, actual, real goal, whatever you want to word it, was what?

The exchange exhibits a pattern typical of the conferences we recorded: Vinten-Johansen relentless in questioning students about the claims they make in their papers and how they substantiate their claims.

These five elements—the packet and the attendant research and discussions in small groups, the books about the Armada and the accompanying discussions of the authors' theses and substantiation, student presentations from the Youings and Elton texts, the short papers and the longer research paper, and the conferences on the papers—constitute the opportunities that Vinten-Johansen has created for students to learn. But why these elements? Where do these come from? In particular, what seems to be the relationship between Vinten-Johansen's understanding of his subject—including his ideas about the nature of the history, how one comes to know history, and how new knowledge and understandings are generated—and the purposes and opportunities to learn they create?

Rationale for the Workshop Approach to History

Vinten-Johansen's pedagogy and purpose is grounded in his understandings of what history is and what it means to know and do history. In the data I identified six ideas that appear central to his view of history: (1) The record of the past lends itself to multiple interpretations; (2) a given event can only be understood in the context in which it occurred; (3) part of the historian's task is to link a given event to its context in a way that produces an interpretation of the event; (4) a critical aspect of writing history consists in placing oneself in someone else's shoes and seeing the world as he or she saw it; (5) historical accounts and interpretations should be judged on their own terms according to how well the historian substantiates his/her thesis; and (6) history is written for the present generation and, hence, the past needs to be periodically re-interpreted.

These ideas are not merely idiosyncratic beliefs; they coincide with the views expressed by other historians and philosophers of history, particularly those who have been categorized under the label "idealist." (Walsh, 1984/1967). Idealist historians have been defined as such to distinguish them from "positivists" who believe, in Tosh's (1984) words, "the essence of historical explanations lies in the correct application of generalizations derived from other disciplines supposedly based on scientific method such as economics, sociology and psychology" (p. 110). Idealist historians, on the other hand, distinguish human events, which have an "inside"—that is, at the core of human events are human motives, beliefs, feelings, and so forth which must be apprehended if the events are to be understood—from natural events that are amenable to the inductive methods of science (for further discussion, see Collingwood, 1956/1946; Croce, 1921; Walsh, 1984/1967).

Moreover, as Novick's (1988) recent treatment reveals, the historical profession in the United States has moved away from earlier, unsophisticated notions about objectivity. That the conceptual framework of the historian, built up through his or her experiences in particular cultures during a particular period, shapes not merely interpretation but what he or she chooses as the object of study has become a commonplace.

I draw attention to the similarities between Vinten-Johansen's views and those of historians in the idealist tradition to place him in the debate in the field over the nature of history and historical inquiry. I do not mean to suggest either that Vinten-Johansen sees himself as an idealist nor that his views consistently line up with those identified with idealist historians. Below, I examine the ideas that I believe lie at the core of both Vinten-Johansen's views of history and his pedagogy. Table 1 presents a summary of the experiences in the course and the understandings they seemed designed to encourage. Although I have relied primarily on interview data in developing these ideas, I have also drawn on other sources such as transcripts of classes and student conferences as well.

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

Table 1

Components of the History Workshop and Corresponding Understandings of History Experiences are Designed to Develop

Component of Experience	Understanding of History
The workshop: Goodwin-Fortescue case—"The packet"	**History as interpretation and historical inquiry as making sense out of past events.**
• Establishing chronology.	• Accurate chronology is essential—historians need to know what went on when.
• Identifying topics for research.	• Events must be understood in the context in which they occurred.
• Working with topic group to find information and primary group to put the pieces together.	• History is constructed by a community of historians who rely on each other for information and ideas. Doing history involves developing a sense for background, setting, the broader contextual developments.
• Writing first and second draft of research paper.	• Writing history is making sense out of an event in its context for oneself, in the first place, and to communicate to others the sense one has made.
The Armada	
• Discussing Mattingly's *The Armada.*	• Historians' preoccupations with the past are shaped by the present—in this sense, all history is contemporary. Changes in political, moral, and philosophical sensibilities lead to revisions of history.
• Discussing Fernandez-Armesto's account of the Armada.	
• Writing comparison of these two accounts.	• As doing history is a process of interpretations, historians can and do disagree about the same events in the past. Evaluating conflicting accounts requires examining how well historians account for the facts as these are known. Personal prejudice is poor grounds for preferring one account to another.
Elton & Youings	
• Leading seminar discussion on parts of the texts.	• Identifying pertinent contextual information and communicating to others.

The record of the past lends itself to multiple interpretations

Underlying Vinten-Johansen's commitment to the workshop approach that he uses in his historiography seminar is his view that there is no single account of the past. Rather, the past can be ordered and interpreted in a number of ways. This is evident in the following justification Vinten-Johansen offered during our interview for the essay students write comparing the two accounts of the Armada that they read:

> History is a series of interpretations and viewpoints that are based in evidence but various readings of the very same evidence issues of selectivity, the background of the historian would eventuate in different outcomes. . . . [The students] needed to see that history is not simply a series of chronological recapitulations. That it involves a process of understanding not just what happened but how and why it happened as it did. And I wanted them to see that Mattingly had looked at this, had not just come up with a view of the Armada based upon . . . his own interests or proclivities, but that the range of evidence that he looked at eventuated in a certain interpretational point of view and one that I hoped that some of them would take issue with. And to kind of pique that a bit, I made sure that Fernandez-Armesto had some different points of view so that they could see that, you know, intelligent and reasonable people could disagree without turning into fisticuffs. So [the paper served] two purposes; one, to see that all history is a process of interpretation, and two, that if they're going to do history themselves, they've got to develop interpretations. Not just simply recount what happened. It's not just a—what's the word I want—it's not just a chronology but chronicle.

What Vinten-Johansen says here echoes others who have attempted to define the study of history. For example, Walsh (1984/1967) defines history as a "significant" narrative of the past; that is, a narrative in which the historian has labored to uncover the "intrinsic" relationship among events in order to produce a coherent whole from the events he or she studies:

> [The historian's] way of doing that, I suggest, is to look for certain dominant concepts or leading ideas by which to illuminate his facts, to trace connections between those ideas themselves, and then to show how the detailed facts become intelligible in the light of them by constructing a "significant" narrative of the events of the period in question. (Walsh, 1984/1967, p. 61)

In researching the Goodwin-Fortescue case, students soon find that several interpretations are possible for the evidence they uncover. In particular, they must decide whether this is a case of Parliamentary privilege or of Royal prerogative. That is, had Parliament, as some Members claimed, been granted certain privileges by the Tudors—Elizabeth I, in particular—that empowered it to decide matters related to its internal governance such as the validity of elections and who has the right to sit in Parliament? Or, as James I claimed, did the monarch have the prerogative, by divine right, to over-ride any decision Parliament might reach? The facts do not, to the students' dismay, speak for themselves. In their research papers, they must argue for an interpretation and substantiate their argument. The notion that history *is* interpretation is no longer an abstraction; interpret the students must.

A given event can only be understood within the context in which it occurred

In describing historical inquiry, Walsh (1984/1967) places at the heart of the enterprise delineating the "intrinsic" relationship between one event and others. Vinten-Johansen gives expression to this by the way he situates the Goodwin-Fortescue case within the overall organization of the course and within history:

> Students are forced, first, into a sense for a broader context, that even if they. . . . look at a particular event such as the Armada they have to recognize that the Armada cannot be viewed in isolation. . . . So the first goal of doing history is to have a sufficient sense for background, setting, the broader contextual developments. To be able to know more or less where a particular event might be situated.

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

In fact, all the readings in the course had as a primary purpose providing students with a context for the case. The accounts of the Armada set the stage for the transition from the Tudors to Stuarts and England's emergence as a Protestant power capable of counter-balancing Catholic power on the continent; the Elton and Youings texts offered details of the political, diplomatic, and social milieu in which the case occurred. The use of the topic-specific groups to gather information was precisely to delineate and fill out the context of the controversy.

The historian's task is to link a given event to its context in a way that produces an explanation for the event

This is most clearly expressed in Vinten-Johansen's purpose for the research paper that students wrote on the basis of their investigations and discussions of the Goodwin-Fortescue controversy. In our first interview, Vinten-Johansen explained:

> Students need to recognize that particular events are confusing to the participants at the time. The clarity that we often impose historically is an artifact. . . . They need to go back and, in a sense, become absorbed in the uncertainty, in contingency, the lack of perspective in an event itself. Once they have . . . that confusion, then the goal is to essentially recognize that the role of the historian is to impose clarity on the past for a particular purpose. The purpose is: first, clarity for the individual investigating the event to try to understand what he or she thinks occurred. The second is clarity in terms of communication to others. Why would this event in which one has invested one's time and energy and understanding be of significance to other people?

Vinten-Johansen's idea that historians "impose clarity on the past for a particular purpose" comports well with Walsh's (1984/1967) observation that the historian's task is to construct a "significant" narrative of events and Burston's (1976) assertion that historians seek to "elucidate the individual event" (p. 32). Carr (1964) asserts that "[t]he facts of history cannot be purely objective, since they become facts of history only in virtue of the significance attached to them by the historian" (p. 120). These views of "facts" and the historian's relation to them differs markedly from the views of those in the positivist tradition who hold that the historian's beliefs and values are largely irrelevant (see, for instance, Benson, 1972).

Just as the texts in the course—particularly Elton and Youings—and the topic-specific groups were the vehicles for filling out the context of the case, the primary groups were the forum in which information on the context and insights students had gathered in their research were pooled to make sense out of the information gleaned from the documents in the packet. Again, the process of inquiry and collaborative "sense-making," more than either the primary documents or the secondary sources, constituted the principal opportunity for students to develop understandings of the nature of historical knowledge and inquiry.

Writing history involves placing oneself in someone else's shoes and seeing the world as he or she saw it

In discussing this component of his view of history, Vinten-Johansen described during our first interview how he has used *To Kill A Mockingbird* in another course he taught:

> There's one point in [the novel] when [the little girl] stops and says, "You know, suddenly I can step inside the shoes, and I can walk around in them for a few minutes, and I could understand that Boo was not that different from me where it counted," or something like that. . . . I use that, and [I urge my students] to "use your feelings and your intuitions not as the basis for your judgment, but as the vehicle for getting yourself out of your present, and at least making a pass [at getting] into these very strange waters of the past."

In describing his use of literature, especially novels, in his history courses, Vinten-Johansen explains why he tries to create opportunities for students to experience, imaginatively, someone else's reality:

> What is the context that would help explain why they did that? There's usually an explanation for what human beings do. Even a serial killer you can figure out. There's a lot of detective work, I suggest to [my students], even though I don't like the whole notion of history as detective [work]. . . . There is that sense of what a good detective has to do in order to try to understand, to solve a problem, a murder or what have you, that a historian also can make use of, and that tends to work. But because of the difficulties that students have with [putting themselves in someone else's place] . . . you'll see how chock full [my courses] are of literature. . . . And that's largely because I have found literature is one of the most effective ways of getting students into a different world view.

Such imaginative projection into the hearts and minds of others in the past is, for a number of philosophers and historians, a critical requirement for understanding and doing history. In particular, idealist historians such as Croce (1921) and Collingwood (1956) argue that historical truths are not generalizations of the sort that the physical scientists seek but rather individual, applying to a particular event rather than to a category of events. Understanding individual events is possible because these experiences are a consequence of human thought and doings which are accessible to the historian. According to Walsh (1984/1967), the historian can "re-think or re-live" the thoughts and experiences of individuals in the past: "This process of imaginative reliving . . . is central to historical thinking, and explains why that study can give us the individual knowledge which other sciences fail to provide" (p. 44). Elton (1967), in distinguishing between amateur and professional historians, observes that "[t]he purpose and ambition of professional history is to understand a given problem from the inside" (p. 18).

Vinten-Johansen views the experience of imaginative re-thinking and re-living as a critical antidote to the presentism common not merely among his students but characteristic of the way many in society think of the past. The issue arose in the first seminar discussion of *The Armada* when a female student objected to an analogy Mattingly uses to compare the way Elizabeth I managed the people of England to the way a woman manages her lover. The student accused Mattingly of sexism. After soliciting other students' views of this observation, Vinten-Johansen discussed the charge:

> If you are going to stand back and try to be objective, it is a sexist description, by our current standards. But then, as a practicing historian, you have to stop and say, "Wait a minute. What kind of society was this?" In so far as that society was sexist by our standards, then it is possible that Mattingly has captured sexism in the society. If Mattingly had written this book thirty or forty years later than he did, it is very possible that he would have figured out a way to let us know whether he approved or disapproved of that sexism, but writing in the 1950s—actually he started writing in the 1940s—was essentially a decade before the full popular explosion, so to speak, of the notion of sexism.

Notice that in this class, the second of the term, Vinten-Johansen is already including students in the category of "practicing historians," explaining to these novitiate historians the culture and the conventions of the enterprise of doing history. Vinten-Johansen, in class, frequently asks questions intended to alert students to their use of contemporary beliefs, knowledge, moral standards, and attitudes to judge the actions of individuals in the past. In discussing students' first drafts of their research papers, he frequently questions students about their judgments of Members of Parliament or James I, asking what purpose is served by characterizing James—as one student did—as "stupid" because he insisted on the divine right of kings.

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

Historical accounts should be judged on their own terms according to how well the historian substantiates his or her thesis

This component of Vinten-Johansen's view of history is central to the total experience of the course. Many of his comments on students' papers—like the quotation from his comments on Dick's paper above—focus on this issue. This parallels Vinten-Johansen's insistence that historical events be understood, as much as possible, from the "inside," although he acknowledges, as Berlin (1954) argues, that our capacity to do so is restricted by the degree to which our understandings are framed by the moment in which we live.

The emphasis on judging historians in the terms of the purposes and methods that they set for themselves appears to be Vinten-Johansen's way to help students think about the importance of internal consistency and overall coherence to the persuasiveness of the argument they will make in their research paper. His comments on students' papers and to students in individual conferences and class focus on the viability of the arguments they are attempting to make rather than on whether the interpretation is right or wrong.

In the following student conference, Vinten-Johansen addresses his comments to Kathy's criticisms of Mattingly in the comparative essay:

Kathy: I guess I'm judging Mattingly by . . .

PVJ: By Fernandez-Armesto's criteria? Is that fair?

Kathy: I guess not.

PVJ: Would you want somebody to decide whether you have had a successful undergraduate career on the basis of your buddy's standards of what makes success, your parents' standards to success, or your own standards of success?

Kathy: My own.

PVJ: All right. Then you've got to extend the same courtesy to Mattingly. What was he trying to do in his book? Does he do that well? What was Fernandez-Armesto trying to do? Does he do that well?

History is written for the present generation and, hence, the past needs to be periodically re-interpreted

A critical aspect of Vinten-Johansen's view of historical knowledge is that our understanding of the past changes as circumstances in the present change. This is evident when he discusses the use of both Mattingly's and Fernandez-Armesto's accounts of the Armada. Published some 38 years apart, they offer contrasting interpretations of the event:

> It becomes a . . . perfect instance in which one can show the need for constant historical revision. That we are writing for a present generation and that present generation is never the same. So that even if no new material is unearthed on a subject like the Armada, let's say, one can go back—and with different eyes, different assumptions, with different goals in mind—can make a very valuable contribution in trying to [understand the events].

The experience of the workshop itself is designed to convey the idea that "different eyes" may produce different interpretations. As Postan (1970) argues, "[t]he facts of history, even those which in historical parlance figure as 'hard and fast,' are no more than relevances: facets of past phenomena which happen to relate to the preoccupations of historical inquirers at the time of their inquiries" (p. 51).

Discussion

Vinten-Johansen's understanding of historical knowledge and the enterprise of doing history can be viewed as part of the larger discourse about knowing in history and historical inquiry. Like other historians and philosophers, he views history as primarily interpreting the past, of weaving together past events in a way that creates an explanation both for individual events and for the resulting whole fabric. For Vinten-Johansen, the essence of historical inquiry is uncovering the relationship of a specific event to the wider context in which it is embedded and, thereby, coming to understand the event in its context from the inside. This is, however, only half the historian's task. Historians must also communicate their understandings to others. To do so, they must create a text driven by their understanding of the events and substantiated by the evidence of the events themselves and from the context—cultural, social, political, economic, diplomatic, intellectual—in which the events occurred. By coming to understand the context and recreating this for the reader, the historian can produce a text that may induce the reader to re-enter, with him or her, the particular moment in the past and see the events from within. This describes Mattingly's *The Armada*, a text that Vinten-Johansen holds in high esteem.

Vinten-Johansen's understanding of history as a field of human inquiry represents but half of the knowledge that makes him an unusual pedagogue. He has also thought a great deal about what experiences are likely to help students develop the understandings of history and the doing of history for which he aims. He appreciates that merely reading history and about history is unlikely to enable students to develop such understandings of history and historical inquiry. This appreciation may be traced to Vinten-Johansen's own experiences as a student of history. As a graduate student in history at Yale, Vinten-Johansen studied with Professor Jack Hexter who pioneered work in the use of history workshops. That experience appears to have been seminal not only in Vinten-Johansen's notions about history and historical inquiry but also in his ideas about how students come to develop an appreciation for these views of history.

The historiography course as described above is the point at which Vinten-Johansen's views of history and historical inquiry intersect with his ideas about learning history and his knowledge of his students. He has modified the idea of the history workshop he experienced as a graduate student to fit the level of intellectual development he believes typical of his undergraduates. Rather than leaving students on their own, as he had been left as a graduate student, to decide what information they would need to make sense of the case and where they might find that information, Vinten-Johansen helps students identify the contextual factors on which they require more information and places on reserve in the library secondary texts he knows contain this information. His selection of texts for the course serve double duty: They exemplify different types of histories—specifically, narrative, analytical, social, and political—and they provide contextual information for the case they are researching. Paper assignments are carefully articulated with the rest of the course. Early papers are designed to help students recognize and, then, construct a thesis and understand how historians go about substantiating a thesis. The seminar itself is also an exercise in identifying, constructing, and substantiating theses about past events. All of these experiences have in common the direct involvement of students: Students in the course rarely have the opportunity to be passive, even if they might prefer to remain so.

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

Students' Thinking about History

Ideas about doing history

As the above account reveals, most of the historiography seminar focused on students' understandings of writing narrative history; how historians gather, assess, and make sense of evidence; how they decide the relative weight to give different bodies of evidence; how they develop and test historical theses; what problems are inherent in constructing historical accounts and explanations and how historians deal with these. Such understandings are vital if students are to develop a critical attitude towards the historical accounts they encounter. Understanding the extent to which historical accounts are products of the particular historical circumstances in which their creators live and are dependent on the available evidence is the essence of appreciating the constructed, interpretative, and tentative nature of our knowledge of the past.

Such an appreciation prepares prospective teachers to help their students develop perspectives on historical accounts. For instance, such an appreciation prepares teachers to help their students understand why certain groups have been under-represented both in accounts of the past and in constructing the accounts of the past on which non-specialists depend. Understanding the constructed nature of historical accounts is critical if teachers are to help students appreciate why all accounts, including those of the present day, are subject to constant revision. Finally, such an appreciation, to some extent, de-mystifies the writing of history and may, perhaps, prompt teachers to see themselves and their pupils as capable of constructing their own accounts, however modest, of past events and people.

At the beginning of the historiography course, the students in our sample, while they held somewhat disparate views on doing history and the nature of historical accounts, seemed to share several conceptions. The first of these is that, in writing history, *first-hand accounts of events are more reliable than more distal accounts*. In describing how they would write an historical account, they rarely mentioned the use of secondary sources. Several students also recognized that eye-witness accounts, while highly reliable, often conflict. In such cases, the historians' task is to balance the accounts, rather like an accountant or a mathematician:

> You'd have to take everything from the South and the North like a grain of salt and then put it all together some way and see if like someone in the South said there is a hundred soldiers in this troop and then the other one said there was like ninety-eight. That's pretty close. So it must be true. Kind of like math. (Steve, IV#1)[1]

During the interview, we gave students a copy of the text of President Johnson's speech to a joint session of Congress that eventuated in the Tonkin Bay Resolution that provided a legislative justification for the military build-up in Vietnam in the mid-1960s. We asked them how they might go about writing an account of this speech for a student history journal. Nearly all the students mentioned *the importance of learning more about the context* in order to understand the speech and the resulting resolution. To discover more about the context and the resolution itself, nearly all said they would consult secondary sources in contrast to their observations that historians seek out eye-witness accounts.

Most seemed to have a point of view on the issue of Vietnam and assumed that they would write an article to support that point of view. The purpose of consulting secondary sources would be to gather information to substantiate a position they had already taken, not to help them interpret the speech. None mentioned that the actual processes of researching and writing would be means to get clearer about what they thought about the issue. This assumption that historians bring predetermined positions to the writing of historical accounts is consistent with the reflexive view, expressed

throughout the interviews, that all historical accounts are, by definition, biased. Bias can be traced to the personal circumstances—race and region of birth, for instance—of the historian.

We presented the students with brief summaries of four conflicting interpretations of Reconstruction drawn from Foner's (1988) recent reassessment. Most were unaware of any account of Reconstruction other than the one we christened the "Gone-with-the-Wind" view: Northern Reconstructionists—the dread carpetbaggers—manipulated ignorant and largely passive former slaves to their own self-aggrandizing ends. When asked which of the four versions they found most credible, not surprisingly almost all of the students chose the one with which they were most familiar—the "Gone-with-the-Wind" version—despite the fact that historians, for several decades, have attacked and discredited this interpretation (DuBois, 1935; Foner, 1988; Woodward, 1986). Interestingly, one student who had read Foner's account for a survey course in American history, mentioned that Foner's differences with David Donald (1965), another historian of the Reconstruction era, arose from the fact that Donald was a Southerner and Foner a Northerner.

Virtually all of the students, asked to explain the differences among the various accounts of Reconstruction, ascribed these to the historians' personal biases: whether they were from the North or the South, whether they were black or white, and whether or not they were prejudiced toward blacks. As one student told us, "If Jimmy Joe Bob from the South is writing about the Civil War, I'm sure he'd be biased to reasons why the South had the right idea and the North didn't" (Jeff, IV#1). Another observed that a Southerner could not have constructed the interpretation that characterized Reconstruction policies as essentially conservative because they didn't entail land redistribution.

Two students who also subscribed to the general notion that historical accounts are by nature biased talked less about the role of *personal biases* and more about how the preoccupations and concerns of a given time shapes historians' perspectives. Responding to a revisionist account of Reconstruction that focused on the role of African Americans in shaping not only the agenda and policies of Reconstruction but also Southern society and institutions in the immediate post-war period (Foner, 1988), Curt said:

> I think it was written more in the time of the civil rights movement than after because I don't think that anybody would've looked at things that way before. I assume that this was written by a black, just because I don't think that anybody before that looked to say that the blacks were the center of everything. It just seems like something that you wouldn't think about until there was a big black movement again. (Curt, IV#1)

After learning when the various interpretations of Reconstruction that we gave her to read had been constructed and by whom, Mary mentions both the role of personal bias and of the historical moment in the historian writes:

> It makes a big difference if you know where they're coming from. If you know if they're black or white, if you know when they're writing, because you can think of what their culture is like at that time. You know what might be affecting their views. (Mary, IV#1)

Views of history

For another analytical category that we termed "views of history," we drew on several different questions in the interview as well as from students' comments in the seminar. In the interviews that we did at the beginning of the seminar, two-thirds of the students in the sample believed that historians' accounts are, to greater or lesser degrees, instruments of their personal biases—such things as their gender, race, regional origins, political commitments and nationality. A few students do mention that historians need to be conscious

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

of their own biases and that such awareness could help them counterbalance their biases. By and large, however, the students assumed that biases are irresistible forces against which historians are impotent. As one student commented,

> With something like the civil rights movement, our way of looking at things is not too different than it was in the 50s, 60s, and 70s because it wasn't that long ago. So we would only see it from our bias. We wouldn't see it from an outside point of view . . . because you get emotional about something, you have strong emotions either one way or the other. It's going to blind you a little bit to the ways things really are. You may get all the facts right but it will color it a little in your mind and if you're writing about it or talking about it, it will color it in the minds of other people . . . like the examples I read about the four versions of Reconstruction. We had the Northerner writing that the Radical Reconstructionists were great guys because he was really caught up in that cause and he really believed in it, so he downplayed what really happened and built the Radical Reconstruction position for the Negro and doing all these wonderful things out of the goodness of their hearts. (Karen, IV#1)

Historians write accounts of the past in order to push their own political agendas. Such a belief in the dominating power of personal bias produces a fashionable cynicism, a relativism in which all accounts are *equally* biased. According to this view, no account is entirely wrong nor are any entirely right.

Skepticism toward historical accounts is precisely the stance most history instructors would like their students to take. Certainly, Professor Vinten-Johansen tried to help his students develop such stances. Yet, a cynicism that ignores the standards and criteria that historians have developed for judging the relative merits of various accounts is as reflexive and unthinking as a gullibility that accepts all accounts as equally true. Having arrived at such a cynical position, students can easily mistake their stance for critical analysis and reasoned judgment.

This skeptical stance is, however, fertile ground for teachers bent on encouraging a critical view of history in their students. As Vinten-Johansen observed, "[h]istory is a series of interpretations and viewpoints that are based in evidence but various readings of the very same evidence—issues of selectivity, the background of the historian—would eventuate in different outcomes . . . "—a point of view shared by numerous practicing historians and philosophers of history (see, for example, Carr, 1954; Collingwood, 1956/1946; Croce, 1921; Geyl, 1955; Handlin, 1979; Walsh, 1984/1967). From at least three of the students, the data we collected seemed to show an evolution of thought beyond the reflexive cynicism described above. In the first interview, Mary, one of the three, responded to our question of why historians' interpretations of Reconstruction differ as follows:

> I think a lot has to do with like the time they live in and their background. Like the one by W. E. B. Dubois. . . . He was black and you can sort of tell that he's trying to make the blacks, make it sound like they were actively involved in the Civil War and actively involved in getting themselves free. (Mary IV#1)

A year later, the focus of her remarks shifted—away from the ineluctable effects of personal bias and toward the indeterminate nature of past events. In the following, responding to a question about whether facts or concepts should be the focus of history instruction, Mary references her experience in Vinten-Johansen's seminar:

> When I had Peter's class, we read two different books on the Spanish Armada. One book I hated because I thought he contradicted himself the whole time and I didn't agree with what he was trying to say. But if he had made a case for it, if he'd supported himself better, I would have said, "Oh, OK, this works." But then the other book had different ideas and he supported himself well. And I don't necessarily subscribe to one or the other, but I'm like, "OK, I can see this" and "OK, I can see this." You've got to figure out what's going on from the two different ideas. But if you don't support yourself, people just aren't going to believe you. That's why I don't like textbooks

> because they'll say, "This happened, this happened, this happened and this is why," and that's not necessarily why.... You know a lot of that's up in the air. I mean you can make speculations and you know you may be right and a lot of people may think that this is why, they may think the same reasons. But you don't know, you weren't there. (Mary IV#2)

As we conducted these follow-up interviews during the Persian Gulf War, Mary used this conflict to illustrate her point in the context of a question about the war in Vietnam:

> I don't think that history is all cut and dry.... I mean, you can say, "Yes, this happened on this date, this happened on this date" . . . but you can't talk about motives. I don't know what I think motives for Vietnam are. Twenty years from now, me or somebody else is going to think different motives.... That's the kind of stuff that you can't tie down.... Some historian will write [about the Persian Gulf War] and say this is what happened and this is why, but then another historian's going to come out and say this is what happened and this is why and neither of those two people are going to agree. It's going to be totally different accounts. (Mary IV#2)

In this response, we can discern a focus on human motivation—that is, reconstructing what lay behind the actions of people in the past—as well as an appreciation for the fundamentally interpretative nature of all historical accounts. Evidence of similar concerns for human motivation and appreciation of the interpretative nature of historical accounts appears in the follow-up interviews of seven of the nine students for whom we have data on this dimension of historical understanding.

In the initial interviews, three of the students expressed another view of history: history as cyclical. Again, this view was largely reflexive, a reflection perhaps of popularized versions of Santayana's dictum that "Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it." Karen is typical of those who held this view. Asked how she would respond to a hypothetical high schooler who wondered why bother studying history, she said:

> I'd tell him, "So you don't go out and make the same mistake yourself one day and get us involved in another war." Because, like I said last time, I believe history is cyclical. Events will happen, not exactly the same over and over again, it's kind of impossible to get all the same things but same general type of things will go on again and again because history really isn't paid too much attention to by anyone. And so they'll come up to a situation . . . that had happened in the past once or several times, same basic type of situation and choices and they'll go right ahead and make the same choice that was made before when it may have had disastrous consequences. You need to have the knowledge so you can possibly avoid repeating the same mistakes and having the same problems.... All history is basically war, peace, war, peace, preparing for the next war. (Karen IV#1)

In the third meeting of the seminar, when Karen suggested that history was cyclical, Professor Vinten-Johansen, aware of the appeal of this view for the popular mind, spoke directly to the difference between historical parallels and the view that "history repeats itself." In the follow-up interviews we conducted a year after the seminar, Karen returned to her view that history is cyclical but she devotes equal attention to her belief that

> history can be interpreted in different ways. In a lot of cases, it's kind of hard to conclude that this interpretation is absolutely wrong, one hundred percent and this interpretation is the only right one. A lot of it is personal opinion, not fact. (Karen IV#2)

In the follow-up interviews with the other two students who had offered the view that history is cyclical in nature, both appeared less certain that about their earlier beliefs. Bill, for instance, who was perhaps most insistent about

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

the cyclical nature of history, devotes, in his second interview, greater attention to the interpretative nature of history than to its cyclical nature.

One explanation for these apparent changes is that students learned from Vinten-Johansen's critique of this view that it is unpopular among historians. This isn't, however, what students communicate in the interviews. Rather, at least two of the three students who initially expressed this view seem to have moved beyond it, developing conceptions of history more textured and variegated than simplistic dicta on the nature of history.

Finally, one student, particularly interested in archaeology, initially viewed history as the orderly presentation of information about past political events and the people involved. Asked in her first interview about the historiography seminar, she opined,

> In this 201 class, we don't have a textbook so when we read the Armada books, they were mainly just the author's interpretation of the work. They were facts in a way but they were kind of tainted by their preference and I like textbooks, how they come across as straightforward and just give me the facts. . . . They don't have opinions or personal feelings in them. (Nancy IV#1)

A year later, Nancy's beliefs that the facts of history are unsullied by opinions, personal feelings, or perceptions and that textbooks are neutral compendia of facts have not changed. In response to a question about what high school students should learn about the Civil War, she replied,

> The facts. I'd have to get my facts straight before I could teach them. I'd have to look at text books and make sure I was telling them the right idea. I'd just want to make sure that they knew the facts. I wouldn't want to put my opinions or perceptions over the facts. I would just want to tell them the strict facts about it. (Nancy,IV#2)

Perhaps most surprising about Nancy's view is that is wasn't more widely shared by others in the class.

In sum, most of the students in the sample believed, at the outset of the seminar, that the personal circumstances of historians—their gender, race, region—cause them to skew historical accounts. In this view, historical accounts are the means that historians use to pursue their interests and the interest of others in their group. A year later, a subtle shift seems to have taken place in the views of about half the students: They appear to have developed a greater appreciation for the degree to which the present moment and the preoccupations of the present moment shape how all of us, historian and non-specialist alike, see the past. In their frequent references to the historiography seminar, moreover, we seem to be able to discern the effects of the course, particularly their work on the Goodwin-Fortescue case and the comparison of Mattingly's and Fernandez-Armesto's treatments of the Armada. The idea that history is cyclical, a repetition of the same events in different times and places, figures less centrally in the year-later interviews of those students who argued for this view at the outset of the seminar. And the one student who held that history was "just the facts, ma'am," seemed, a year later, to continue to hold this view.

View of teaching and learning history

Perhaps most striking about students' views of history and the doing of history is their relative sophistication. Most view history as interpretation of the records of the past shaped largely by the concerns and preoccupations of the present. When we look at these same students' view of teaching and learning history, however, we are struck by the extent to which they are prisoners of their own experiences. And, compared to the effect that the

historiography seminar had on the views of several of them, the effect on students' beliefs about teaching and learning history was minimal.

When asked how they would help high school students learn the knowledge of the Civil War that they believed important, most of the students said they would lecture. This reflects their own experience in secondary and university history classrooms. Few had experienced any approach to teaching history other than lecturing. Two of the students did mention that they might have students do projects, one touted the value of discussions, one suggested the use of primary sources, and one reported he'd tell "good stories." The latter is an approach that several students believed distinguished good history teaching.

Asked the same question about teaching the civil rights movement, several resorted to the lecture as the primary approach. Most, however, mentioned the use of documentary films. Three students also mentioned the use of primary sources or contemporary accounts. Four touted the value of discussions. Several students also suggested that they would have pupils read "real books"—that is, works of history that are not textbooks.

Although most of the students considered the historiography seminar the best history course they had taken, only one student mentioned the workshop approach in their discussion of methods they might adopt. When we asked them about using such an approach with high school students, several expressed their doubt that high school students have either the motivation or the ability to carry out work of this type. This is perhaps consistent with their belief that Professor Vinten-Johansen 's seminar required them to work more than any other history class they had taken. Describing his experience in the course, one student, who liked the course in spite of receiving a failing grade, said, "Peter puts us through hell."

Most considered learning history as unproblematic, as simply a reflex of learning (Cohen, 1988). Consequently, to learn history, learners need only be told what happened and why—this despite the strong criticism most heaped on the history classes, nearly all of which were lecture courses, they had taken in high school and at university. Jeff is a notable exception. Somewhat baffled by the seminar at the outset, Jeff came to rethink not merely the nature of history but also what it means to know and learn history. Responding to a question about how he might help eighth graders learn about the Civil War, he said:

> I'd want to teach them how to learn because you can't tell someone history because then it defeats the purpose. If you learn it yourself and put your own interpretation on it, you can be guided. . . . The who, how, what, where, when, why are very important questions . . . even Ph.D.s and doctors are still asked that when they write articles. "What do you think about this?" Or " How about this? You didn't consider this." And that's not telling someone they're wrong. It's just saying maybe you can consider this, too. . . . How to learn is important, knowing how to go to the library and look up what's interesting to you. (Jeff, IV#2)

Mark's view of learning also differs from most students in the sample:

> If you just go in and just teach out of a text book and just have them learn things, they're going to get bored and they're not going to know why they're doing it. You have to give them a reason why they're learning and you have to give them some kind of information that they can use out of school. . . . School can't just be a place where you go and then that's the only place you use your knowledge. You should get some kind of knowledge that you can use elsewhere and I think that's what you have to try and do in teaching history.

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

Unlike the other students in the study, Mark took teacher education courses between the first and second interviews. He attributes his outlook on learning to a specific teacher education course:

> Before the class ["Learning and School Subjects"] I had last term I used to think more in terms of what *I* was going to do as a teacher instead of what *they* were going to do as students, and kind of a two-way thing I have to look at how I'm going to help them learn instead of just tell them I'm going to teach. (Mark, IV#2)

In sum, despite their belief that they had learned more in the historiography seminar than in any other history course, most students' views of teaching and learning changed little between the beginning of the seminar and one year later. Most believe learning is a reflex of teaching; most say they would lecture to students despite the fact that their own experiences of lectures are overwhelmingly negative. Several students also thought film documentaries and primary sources were appropriate for teaching about the civil rights movement. Two students offered different views of learning, one perhaps due to his own struggle to understand and the other because a course focused his attention on learners' experiences of learning.

Discussion

What are the effects of experiences such as the historiography seminar described here on students' understanding of history and the teaching and learning of history? Answering this question is fraught with all the problems that attend attempts to trace any individual's understanding or knowledge, or back to a particular source. In the first instance, we don't know the relationship between a person's understanding and a particular experience. That they developed new understandings, beliefs, insights, knowledge, behaviors after a given experience in no way establishes that the experience is responsible for the change. Changes might well be due to other experiences not investigated. In addition to attending other classes, students, during the year we followed them, also talked with family and friends and others, read a range of texts, viewed television and movies, listened to the radio, and so on. The evolution of their understanding may well owe as much or more to these experiences than to the 19 meetings of the historiography seminar.

The difficulty of tracing understandings back to particular experiences is further compounded by the dimensions of knowledge in which we were interested. As the discussion above reveals, our understandings of the nature of historical inquiry and knowledge are bound up with broader understandings such as how we determine the truth about anything. Appreciating the role that context—historical moment, material circumstances, class and race, relation to political authority, cultural milieu—plays in shaping how individuals make sense of experience is fundamental, not merely to understanding the argument that is history but to understanding why groups and individuals come into conflict. Developing such an appreciation can just as well—and probably far—more often occur in the course of daily life than in formal academic settings.

Not only are understandings difficult to trace to their sources, but they are difficult to grasp. Much in our culture, in fact, legislates against understandings of the type Professor Vinten-Johansen has designed his seminar to cultivate. We are led to believe, particularly as young people, that in virtually all matters, true and false exist unambiguously. Stories are either true or false. Either former African-American slaves were the ignorant dupes of carpetbaggers or they weren't. A belief that stories are either true or false is less taxing on us—and especially on those of us charged with teaching history—than the alternative: that we often cannot determine precisely what

happened in the past and even if we could we can't be sure what meaning to impute to what seems to have happened. Were African-American ex-slaves the dupes historians of the Burgess-Dunning school made them out to be? Or were they the active but tragically frustrated architects, in cooperation with Radical Republicans, of a design for genuine political and economic freedom undone by the machinations of Southern Redeemers and by wider economic misfortune (Foner, 1988)? For a long time, the former was regarded as truth, celebrated in such popular icons as D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. Today, historians may regard the Foner's version as nearer the truth. Grasping that what we widely regard today as truth may soon be regarded as myth, as a version of reality that, like the Burgess-Dunning version of Reconstruction, serves the interests of a particular group, is no small intellectual feat. Consequently, expecting students to develop such an appreciation for the constructed nature of reality, for truth, in a semester—or even in a year—is probably unrealistic. I could mount similar arguments for the other understandings Professor Vinten-Johansen hoped his students would develop.

That we did find some evidence that a majority of the students appreciated this aspect of historical knowledge and, moreover, that their understanding seemed to become more textured, more nuanced over time was as encouraging as unexpected. Unexpected because, however intensive, the seminar is but one thin strand in the skein of students' total experience. Moreover, university classes are rarely compelling experiences.

Most of the students in the historiography seminar seemed, in fact, to find the experience compelling. Aspects of the experience that render the workshop a compelling experience seemed to include: attempting to make sense of events not already treated by historians; sorting through and making sense of evidence and the context collaboratively with one's peers where progress in understanding is genuinely dependent on others; and developing an original thesis and mustering support for it under the close critical attention of a teacher who expresses his concern for student growth through the seriousness with which he treats their efforts.

Although most students did appear to find the experience compelling, their developing understanding of the nature of historical knowledge and inquiry seems largely disconnected from their beliefs about teaching and learning. I was surprised that a learning experience that was as powerful as apparently the seminar was for most students should have provoked so little reflection on learning and teaching. This should raise questions about the assumption, common among some policymakers, that greater subject matter exposure constitutes better preparation for teaching. Even engaging and compelling experiences with a subject matter such as the historiography seminar is unlikely to provoke students to reconsider their beliefs about teaching and learning the subject matter. Of the two students who did reconsider their beliefs, one traced his reconsideration not to the seminar itself but a later teacher education course.

Conclusion

I undertook this study to find out more about how students respond to an experience designed to challenge their understandings of historical knowledge. In particular, I was interested in the influence of such an experience on students' understanding of the nature of historical knowledge and inquiry and the teaching and learning of history. I reasoned that what prospective teachers regard as historical knowledge is critical to a variety of decisions they make as teachers—from the materials they use in teaching to the kind of discourse they encourage in their classroom. I further

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

reasoned that an experience of learning history that students felt to be compelling might also influence their views of teaching and learning the subject.

I found that the course did, indeed, challenge their views of historical knowledge and did so in compelling ways. I also found evidence that several of the students in the seminar reconsidered their initial beliefs about the nature of historical knowledge and inquiry. How much of this reconsideration was motivated by the seminar experience, I cannot determine. Yet, the data suggest that the experience did play a significant role.

Most of the students began the seminar with the view that historical accounts were shaped largely by the personal biases of historians and that historical accounts were the instruments of their authors' self-interest—a profoundly cynical view. A year later, several of these students had evolved views in which historical accounts, inevitably, bore the imprint of the times in which they were written. These students still believe that readers must consider personal biases in judging competing accounts, but more pertinent might be historical context in which the historian constructs his or her account.

Yet most of the students' views of teaching and learning history remained unchanged. Teaching is seen as largely a matter of making learners aware of past events and the rationale for these events. Learning would follow. Students who had reconsidered their ideas about history knowledge were not moved to reexamine their beliefs about teaching and learning. This suggests that merely addressing prospective teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject matter may not be sufficient. If prospective teachers are to rethink teaching and learning their subject, their unexamined beliefs may need to be challenged as Professor Vinten-Johansen's seminar challenged his students' beliefs about historical knowledge. Forcing prospective teachers to take more arts and science courses in their subject matter seems unlikely to produce such a challenge.

Notes

[1]The information in parentheses following quotations from student interviews include the student's pseudonym and the number of the interview (i.e., IV#1=baseline interview and IV#2=follow-up interview conducted one year later.

References

Benson, L. (1972). *Toward the scientific study of history*. Boston: Lippincott.

Berlin, I. (1954). *Historical inevitability*. London: Oxford University.

Booth, W. C. (1988). *The vocation of a teacher: Rhetorical occasions, 1967-1988*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

Burston, W.H. (1976). *Principles of history teaching* (rev. ed.). London: London & Home Counties Branch of the Library Association.

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Lawrenceville, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Carr, E.H. (1964). *What is history?* Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books.

Collingwood, R.G. (1956). *The idea of history*. London: Oxford University. (Original work published 1946).

Cohen, D. K. (1988). *Teaching practice: Plus ça change . . .* (Issue Paper 88-3). East Lansing: Michigan State University, National Center for Research on Teacher Education.

Croce, B. (1970). *History as the story of liberty*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America. (Original work published in 1941).

Donald, D. (1965). *The politics of reconstruction 1863-1867*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

DuBois, W. E. B. (1935). *Black reconstruction in America*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.

Elton, G. R. (1967). *The practice of history*. London: Sydney University.

Elton, G. R. (1989). *England under the Tudors*. London: Routledge.

Fernandez-Armesto, F. (1988). *The Spanish Armada: The experience of war in 1588*. London: Oxford University.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Floden, R. E., McDiarmid, G. W., & Wiemers, N. (1990). *Learning about mathematics in elementary methods courses* (Research Report 90-1). East Lansing: Michigan State University, National Center for Research on Teacher Education.

Foner, E. (1988). *Reconstruction: America's unfinished revolution, 1863-1877*. New York: Harper & Row.

Geyl, P. (1962). *Debates with historians*. London: Collins. (Original work published in 1955).

Handlin, O. (1979). *Truth in history*. Cambridge: Harvard.

Holmes Group (1986). *Tomorrow's teachers: A report of The Holmes Group*. East Lansing, MI: Author.

Holmes Group (1990). *Tomorrow's schools: Principles for the design of professional development schools*. East Lansing, MI: Author.

Kimball, B. (1986). *Orators and philosophers: A history of the idea of liberal education*. New York: Teachers College.

Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

McDiarmid, G. W. (1988). Values and liberal education: Allan Bloom and the education of teachers. *Colloquy, 2*(2), 9-16.

McDiarmid, G. W. (1990a). Challenging prospective teachers' beliefs during early field experience: A quixotic undertaking? *Journal of Teacher Education, 41*(3), 12-20.

McDiarmid, G. W. (1990b). The liberal arts: Will more result in better subject matter understanding? *Theory Into Practice, 29*, 21-29.

McDiarmid, G. W., Ball, D. L. & Anderson, C. W. (1989). Why staying one chapter ahead doesn't really work: Subject-specific pedagogy. In M. C. Reynolds (Ed.), *Knowledge base for the beginning teacher* (pp. 193-205). New York: Pergamon.

McDiarmid, G. W., Wiemers, N. J., & Fertig, L. (1991, April). *Bounded by their pasts: Exploring the relationship between understandings of history and the views of teaching and learning of history among majors in a historiography seminar*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.

Mattingly, G. (1959). *The Armada*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

National Research Council (1991). *Moving beyond the myths: Revitalizing undergraduate mathematics*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Novick, P. (1988). *That noble dream: The "objectivity question" and the American historical profession*. New York: Cambridge University.

Postan, M. M. (1970). *Fact and relevance*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University.

Pascarella, E. T. & Terenzini, P. (1991). *How college affects students*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rigden, J. S. & Tobias, S. (1991, March 27). Too often, college-level science is dull as well as difficult. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 37*(28), 52.

Rosovsky, H. *The university: An owner's manual*. New York: Norton.

Sewall, G. T. (1987). *American history textbooks: An assessment of quality*. New York: Columbia University, Teachers College, Educational Excellence Network.

Slosson, E. (1910). *The great American universities*. New York: Macmillan.

Smith, P. (1990). *Killing the spirit: Higher education in America*. New York: Viking Penguin.

Tosh, J. (1984). *The pursuit of history*. New York: Longman.

Vinten-Johansen, P. (In this volume). *Reflections of a journeyman historian*. East Lansing: Michigan State University, National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.

Walsh, W. H. (1984). *An introduction to philosophy of history* (3rd ed., rev.). Westport, CT: Greenwood. (First published in 1967).

Woodward, C. V. (1986). *Thinking back*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University.

Youings, J. (1984). *Sixteenth-century England*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books.

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

Reflections of a Journeyman Historian

Peter Vinten-Johansen

Reading Bill McDiarmid's study, *Challenging Prospective Teachers' Understandings of History: An Examination of a Historiography Seminar* yields mixed feelings for me.[1] I am flattered by Bill's interest in evaluating the teaching rationale and methodology I employ in an introductory historiography workshop—History 201—at Michigan State University. I am also delighted by his interest in finding out what the undergraduates learned, how they learned it, and whether this course experience has any staying power for them.

Nonetheless, Bill's construction strikes me as much too tidy. It does not capture the anxious uncertainty I felt at the beginning of this (and every) course, my persistent reliance on intuition and tacit knowledge long after I sorted out the initial teaching encounters, and the frequent mid-course corrections in strategy required in a course I had already taught several times. These were my thoughts after my first reading of Bill's essay, as I pondered how to convey my reservations in a companion essay he wanted me to write.

So I did what I often do when my mind is muddled—went for a run. I needed a long one into the south-campus stretch of research animal barns and pastures. Unfortunately, middle-age knees now limit me to shorter distances in town. But maybe I've learned to do more with less, for I returned home with a clearer head and a resolution to my dilemma: It is unreasonable to expect Bill McDiarmid to suggest the personal and professional context that explains what I do in History 201 and why I do it. Only I can deconstruct an outsider's picture of my teaching by reconstructing how I believe it evolved. I'll begin with the run that eventuated in this resolution.

◆◆◆◆◆

Running with someone else provides me comradeship; penning alone is the closest I will probably ever come to meditation and psychoanalytical free-association. I have done more of the latter in the last few years than I care to because one running-partner moved away and the other (poor chap) episodically goes lame.[2] But on that January morning when my mind was troubled, it was just as well that there was no one to hook up with at the corner of Hagadorn and Melrose. It was relatively balmy for winter in mid-Michigan, so I was unencumbered by windbreakers and scarf. I used to reach a comfortable pace within the first mile; now it takes longer, but eventually my breathing leveled off and my mind went blank for an indeterminate period. Then came a flashback:

> Two stacks of essays on my desk, about thirty in each. I had promised myself a treat when I reached the half-way point in grading the first set of take-home essays, but my stomach was too queasy to digest the bialy I had saved for a snack. Instead, I was fidgeting in my chair, wondering why I felt part of a colossal fraud.

This image triggered a mental reconstruction of a critical pedagogical episode during my first experience as a graduate assistant (for Franklin L. Baumer at Yale University in 1973).[3] The students' assignment was to summarize the argument in one of the books, and so far I had made the marginal notations and concluding comments as Baumer had instructed: "Read the books yourself, then mark the papers in terms of how closely they approximate the author's argument." It had seemed straightforward enough when Baumer and I discussed a few in his office before I carted off the rest: Evaluate the essays like the mid-term examinations, where the content of Baumer's lectures provided the standard against which I had measured the students'

synopses. I had had no difficulty grading these in-class examinations, but the essays were clearly troublesome, even though I couldn't put my reservations into words. I began paging through Robert Goldwater's *Primitivism in Modern Art*, the selection among four books that most students had chosen to read.[4] It was idle paging—looking at illustrations, reading captions, skimming my underlinings, and glancing at my marginal notations.

There came an epiphanous flash. Although my mind's muddle absorbed most of it, I had something to work with. On a piece of scratch paper, I wrote "INTERPRETATION." When nothing else came to mind, I doodled around the one I did have until phrases spun tangentially from the center of the page. Slowly, I transformed (by a process analogous to what is now termed clustering) an insight into a notion: If the historical profession considers it legitimate for Goldwater to interpret, rather than summarize, modern art; since my marginal dialogues with Goldwater's argument reflected a similar orientation in my own professional training; weren't we, therefore, misleading undergraduates about history when we expected them to regurgitate the assigned reading? I sensed that I would feel more comfortable grading their essays as interpretative exercises. But did the unmarked stack lend itself to such an evaluative standard?

I skimmed a couple of essays, decided that Baumer's insistence on an overview sentence in the opening paragraph was adaptable to my notion, then marked a half-dozen in terms of how effectively the students supported their own views rather than approximated mine. After class the next morning, I asked Baumer to read a sample from each stack.

"Why? Is there a problem with plagiarism?" he replied.

"No. I'm the problem. I marked one essay according to the guidelines we discussed, the other is an experiment. I'd prefer to grade them all by the latter method, but it's your course."

"Can you meet me at my office in thirty minutes?" asked Baumer.

"Sure."

And we walked down the stairs, chatting about the lecture, before parting in the street. I ran a few errands to kill the time Baumer needed to reflect on the marked essays, then knocked on his office door. Nearly twenty years after the event, I still remember how I felt before that meeting—totally at ease. Although I had no idea about the outcome, two years of congenial graduate study under Baumer's direction made me confident that he would make a decision that was fair to the students and give me a full explanation of his reasoning. He opened the door and invited me to sit in an armchair next to his own.

He said nothing for a few moments, looking instead at two essays. I had the impression that this was painful to him, but I was unclear why until he began to speak: "I'm embarrassed that in more than a quarter century of teaching, it has never troubled me to expect students in the survey only to summarize content. If you have time to mark all the essays according to the experimental criteria and provide me with the grading scale you used, I'll read them all and take responsibility for handling any student misgivings. We can also set aside some class time to explain the criteria, even have this essay serve as a rehearsal for the remaining two essays for students who show improvement. It means a lot more work for you than I had anticipated, however; are you certain you have time for it?"

"Not really," I replied; "but if I don't do it now, I probably never will."

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

So began two decades of tinkering with structured essay assignments that promote interpretation of historical evidence. The ideal product is idiosyncratic rather than original—an analytical essay in three parts. The opening paragraph (thesis paragraph) begins with relevant historical context, defines terms, introduces the work to be discussed, and concludes with a thesis statement. The thesis statement should contain the student's interpretation of the author's major argument and an explanation of the meaning or significance of that argument in terms of the historical context established earlier in the paragraph. Substantiation of the thesis constitutes the middle part of the essay. Substantiating paragraphs should have topic sentences that walk the reader through a systematic and comprehensive proof of the thesis. Within these paragraphs, the student is expected to marshal the evidence (documented quotations and paraphrases) that bear on the topic and show explicitly how the evidence is relevant by explaining it in terms of the historical context. That is, I emphasize that quotations do not explain themselves; students are expected to analyze the evidence by connecting it to their own thesis statements. The final part of the essay is the concluding paragraph, in which the student restates the thesis in light of the evidence analyzed in the substantiation. I now expect students in all my classes to follow this analytical model, although I only teach writing—comprehensively—in a modern European intellectual history sequence.[5]

♦♦♦♦♦

The fundamental premise of this writing model is that it facilitates intellectual engagement between teacher and students. Regular and systematic interactions, geared to improving each student's capacity for interpreting historical evidence, can significantly advance the development of analytical skills among those who make conscientious efforts at each stage. My initial successes (in the mid-1970s) caused me problems for a number of years thereafter, however, because I became inflexibly attached to the first set of schematic exercises that brought results and to the developmental pace of a particular student cohort. I experienced a couple of pedagogically enervating years—defending my method against bewildered and (eventually) recalcitrant undergraduates, grousing about what I perceived to be inadequate preparation in high school and "freshman composition" courses, and escaping into my own research and writing. Although my first sabbatical year (1983-84) was devoted to scholarly projects, it also provided sufficient distance from my teaching for me to be able to reflect on what I had done to date.

I resumed teaching duties in the Fall term of 1984 with several modifications that, periodically refined since then, have prevented repetition of the sinkholes I created earlier. First, writing exercises have become alterable means, parts of a process toward a goal, not ends in themselves. While I continue to be explicit about my goal for every student—writing an essay that contains clear interpretation and analysis of historical evidence—the process for achieving that goal involves adjustments reflecting both collective and individual needs.

Second, I realized that I needed something that would help me establish a rough writing-baseline for each class. An ungraded diagnostic essay, written in response to an introductory outline of my expectations, now permits me to situate a new group of students within a workable range on the continuum and then revise my stable of writing exercises accordingly. For me, there are compelling psychological advantages in such a strategy. By beginning my interactions with where students "are at" in terms of my expectations, I can focus the time and energy I have available for teaching entirely on learning: advancing the students' intellectual development, as measured by enhanced facility in discrimination, analysis, and synthesis. My standard for success in learning became relative progress for

individual students on the writing continuum, eventuating in the model essay described above and evaluated according to criteria reflecting progress toward that model. It is also easier for me now to focus on the task at hand, rather than dissipate energy by carping about deficiencies in students' academic backgrounds; the problems that exist become my problems, whether I tackle them myself or send students to someone else who has expertise I lack. Using relativistic standards on a common continuum creates a situation in which students from unusually privileged academic backgrounds remain challenged and involved because they are "competing" against their own baselines rather than their classmates.

My third modification was to make the classroom environment more conducive for students to practice the analytical skills that I expected in their essays. Why was I dismayed by the summation that dominated student essays when I structured the majority of class time around information-dispensing lectures? That is, I was using the classroom simply to lecture about background and complementary subjects to the assigned readings, expecting the students to take notes and (on their own) to extract the information needed for context in their analytical essays. The choice was straightforward: either change my essay expectations or change the structure of the class experience. I chose the latter and launched the first of an unending series of experiments whose objective is to use the classroom as a collective rehearsal space for the modes of reasoning that I expect the students to adopt when composing their essays.

At first, I confined such experimentation to seminars, the third course in the intellectual history sequence, and team-teaching opportunities.[6] Testing new exercises and directed discussion formats on a limited numbers of students, many of whom I already knew quite well, permitted me to sort most successes and failures into two categories—those entirely idiosyncratic to a particular group or class, and those that might have some staying power. The blend of directed discussion, regular groups, and shuffle groups (a term I prefer to "jigsawing") employed in my workshop approach to History 201 reflects several years of such experimentation.[7]

The unexpected outcome (for me at least) of slowly making classroom activities more interactive was a progressive growth of student self-esteem and respect for each other. In my early years of teaching, most classes eventually developed an informal hierarchy reflecting student achievements on the essays; although I steadfastly refused to post grades, student scuttlebutt usually undermined my own efforts to de-emphasize grades in a situation where improvement was rewarded. But when I augmented class discussion, particularly via the small-group format where the objective was to formulate a response for later presentation, most students came to value perspectives offered by classmates for whom analytical writing was often not a strong suit. Students who had faded into the wallpaper during general discussions could gain intellectual confidence from structured group interactions. Meanwhile, most of the talking heads learned how to listen to their classmates. I'm not oblivious to the fact that some students insist until the last hour that groupwork is childishly annoying and a waste of time compared to what I could provide in lectures. When the student grapevine works well, however, self-selection keeps me from confronting such unproductive criticism; after all, there are plenty of lecture classes among which to choose.

To faculty who argue that our bailiwick has no room for parcels like self-esteem and respect, I respond that there is considerable intellectual development connected to the successful interactive situations I use. For example, general discussions are often more focused when preceded by small-group exercises. Moreover, students who have come to know and trust each other gain self-critical skills more quickly from peer review of thesis paragraphs than

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

from individual meetings with me (where authority issues are more complicated). I would also add another advantage of interactive learning, this time advantageous to the teacher. At the end of every course, I realize that close and regular engagement with the students has generated new pedagogical ideas—how I might teach the material more effectively, with respect to the standard described earlier. And as I become increasingly comfortable with the unpredictability in open-ended (albeit structured) classroom experiences, I am increasingly receptive to the original, sometimes illuminating, insights into the material itself generated by the students. At some point not too long ago, the advantages that can accrue from interactive learning finally outweighed worries about losing control of the class. Now I'm hooked for good.

*****

My approach to teaching is obviously time-consuming. Although experience has already yielded some efficient short-cuts, especially in evaluating writing exercises, colleagues tell me that teaching takes more of my time, on average, than it does for them. The explanation is rarely variation in commitment to teaching; we have some shirkers in the Department of History at Michigan State University, but very few in a department that now exceeds fifty faculty members. When I speak with colleagues from other research universities, they are frequently surprised to hear my viewpoint that the preponderant majority in my department are conscientious teachers: most incorporate new material into their lectures and readings; most are accessible to the students; very few utilize any standardized testing instruments at all; and canceled classes are a rarity.

A more likely explanation for differential time requirements associated with teaching is the perceptual gulf dividing conscientious teachers into two varieties. On one side of the gulf is a variety who view their roles primarily as dispensing information and evaluating its reception by their students. On the other side is another variety, composed of those who are primarily concerned with how students process information and reason about it. Members of the latter variety find it more difficult to routinize their teaching tasks than the former; hence, I believe, the difference in time spent on preparation and evaluation between the two varieties.[8]

More than a decade ago, a few of us in the department attempted to formulate distinguishing personality and background characteristics for the two varieties. We first tested the notion that colleagues who had been politically active in the 1960s and early 1970s were processing teachers. We found many exceptions. However, a generational factor did seem to recur—those who reached adulthood in the late 1960s and early 1970s frequently belonged to the processing variety. I fit that profile. But no one, least of all myself, could explain why I was so zealous about teaching innovations, occasionally counter-productively so. When I thought about it all, I ascribed it to a combination of generational rebellion and cultural dissonance (from incomplete naturalization—I was born a Dane). If I may alter the bias somewhat on a bowl by Bernard Shaw, I had drifted to an impression rather than steered to a conclusion.[9]

Someone else helped me understand the source of my zeal. In the mid-1980s, the department chairperson, Gordon Stewart, suggested that we meet informally to discuss my long-range teaching schedule, as well as an essay containing an autobiographical component I had recently written for an antho'~gy. Our conversation meandered to departmental attitudes about teaching and scholarship, including the general perception that I was a mutation from the professional stock. I blurted out my half-baked notion about cultural dissonance, with the modification that being a Young Dane must have something to do with prioritizing the teaching of students how to analyze

higher than more traditional pathways to professional accomplishment such as published scholarship. Gordon gave me a puzzled look, which in itself did not surprise me since we often come down on different sides of issues (although we share common goals in our teaching). Then, with sincere affection, he said something like the following lines: "Peter, I'm about your age and a foreigner, too; I belong to the same teaching variety as you do, but I hold traditional attitudes about the historical profession. What makes you a mutant is Vietnam."

*****

Two flashbacks from 1966 about how Vietnam shaped my attitudes about the primacy of teaching in my role as an historian:

> He really seemed an old man, ready for the retirement he had talked about while interviewing me. I knew the job was mine when he nodded at my answers to several factual questions about the American Civil War. We had never gotten to American Government; fishing in Narragansett Bay preoccupied him too much. Then he handed me a textbook. "Teach this to all five classes. I'll pop in occasionally to check up on you."

And another:

> My first visit to the principal's office since the hiring interview. He had attended one class, opening the door quietly about twenty minutes into the period, sitting for fifteen minutes in the back of the room, then leaving just as unobtrusively. That was this morning. After school, there had been a note in my box to see him. "You have a hearing problem," were his first words. Not to my knowledge; at least nothing problematical showed up during my enlistment physical. "But you must. You cupped your hand behind your right ear whenever a student was talking." That was a signal for them to project their voices so everyone in the class could hear. "You must be hyperkinetic, too. You never stood still behind your desk." Another signal. I want the students to converse with each other, not just respond to me. "Converse? Those pupils aren't on the scholarly track. Most already spend half the schoolday in costume-jewelry factories."

The unasked question in the second meeting with the principal was why the pupils had not been discussing the textbook. Lucky for me, or a merely bewildering session could have taken a catastrophic turn. I had begun as the principal had directed, assigning so many pages and so many questions from the end of each chapter for homework every night, then ploughing that sterile ground again in class. After all, I had no teaching experience and no education courses in my undergraduate background. I was hired to teach twelfth grade civics only because the school district still had twenty vacancies two days before the opening of classes; a body was a body, even if it might be dragged away to Officer Candidate School (OCS) before the year was over. The social studies and history teachers in the adjoining classrooms were helpful chaps, one of them even lending me his lesson plans from the last time he had taught civics. So I followed instructions for three weeks until I was more bored than the pupils—who had learned the useful art of resignation long before my arrival.

But they could also erupt into an unruly mass that I had nary a clue how to handle until, in desperation, I asked my third period class (the "Hands" in the factories) how they felt about being pupils in this school. At first, they verbally fell all over each other. I picked up the textbook and threatened them: "It's back to this if you can't shut up when someone else is talking—and listen while you wait your turn." At the end of the period, I found myself summarizing what they had said and promising to continue the discussion the next day. By the end of the week, we had struck a bargain for the future—one day on the text, four days on other stuff, if they kept up with daily assignments. To my horror, they kept their end of the bargain and I was scrambling for new things to do in class. The principal observed that class

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

about a week later when we were discussing different forms of government, using the high school as a basis for comparison. Fortunately for my continuance, the pupils had already reached the conclusion earlier in the week that their school hovered between a dictatorship and an oligarchy; when the principal opened the door, we were sorting out whether the country had really made a transition from its republican beginnings to full, participatory democracy (as the textbook claimed). He left before someone called for a vote—the result of which would have infuriated him.

Meanwhile, I continued to teach the text to the other four classes. One day after lunch, however, I overheard mutinous whispers as the fifth perioders shuffled into and about the room. Did I pay attention? Of course not; I took attendance and proceeded straight to a review of the chapter questions. I kept at it for ten minutes before their conspiracy of silence defeated me.

"OK, what's going on?"

Not a peep. I tried making light of it, but the sullen faces were unmoved. It is embarrassing to admit that the only arrow left in my quiver was a threat: "Fine with me, people—pop quiz!"

Boom! I felt like the man in the now widely-distributed poster, who grips his armchair as a torrent of sound blasts from a speaker system, whipping his hair straight out behind him.

"Unfair! Jerk! Bastard!" Slamming of books, stomping of feet, scatological expletives, and—what was that innuendo from someone in a seat by the windows?

"Pardon me?" I said, adroitly deflecting the messier slings coming my way. "What did you say?"

Then the accusation hit me square in the chest: "You play favorites."

I had no idea what she meant. If I did anything well in my brief (and looking very brief, indeed) teaching career, it was to spread the questioning among all the pupils.

She followed up without any encouragement from me. "Third period doesn't just go over this crap!" I made a reflex duck as she brandished the textbook. "They talk about things that matter." Support for her bravery crescendoed to a din of noise. "Time out!" I yelled, wishing I could whistle between my teeth like my father, rather than the feeble "tweet" I occasionally muster between two fingers. Why they quieted down is still a mystery to me; obviously, I was not a figure who commanded authority by mere presence and tone. "Julie has something to say."

Luckily for me, Julie didn't clam up but became the fifth period spokesperson for equitable treatment in my classes. I listened to her and several supporters before asking, "But what about your part of the bargain?" Sudden silence, shifting eyes, then a few hushed "What does he mean?" before someone asked me directly.

I explained the agreement I had with the pupils in third period that underlay the new classroom format. After a bit more discussion of the mutual obligations involved, the class voted overwhelmingly—only a few abstained—to join the "Hands" in the interactive mode (as I learned much later it was called). With new respect for the student grapevine, I immediately extended the same offer to the sixth period class that afternoon, the first and fourth the following day. All accepted, although the sixth period (the college-bounders) was the most suspicious and resistant of all; perhaps they feared an inadequately primed pump when it was time to sit for the SAT.

I was in unchartered waters for me, and I thrashed about and made little headway until I developed some new strokes. The first was to cover a textbook chapter on Mondays; this

schedule made Sunday homework a drudge, but the cod liver oil prescribed by the district was down the hatch at the beginning of the week. The second stroke I developed was to deliver a mini-lecture on new material each Tuesday, immediately followed by a question-and-answer session focused on the content of what I had presented. The period ended with a handout (made from a smudged ditto master), listing questions we would discuss the next day; sometimes I assigned primary responsibilities for questions by rows. The rest of the week was spent on forays away from, and back to, these study questions, usually in general class discussion, but sometimes in groups (again by rows). Everyone soon tired of rehashing my mini-lectures for three days, but the only material available in sufficient quantity for 148 pupils were textbooks. The head of the social studies section permitted me to requisition a variety of history texts, which I spread among the five classes. I raided both the Providence public and Brown University libraries for additional sources, and I spent many an afternoon in the school library, setting up group research activities for subsequent days.

It was my good fortune that the school librarian assisted and encouraged me in every manner possible, including accepting supervisory responsibility for groups of students who periodically appeared at her door with hall passes and research assignments, but without me. The first time I sent a group to the library "on its own," a teacher down the hall lassoed and towed them back to me with the comment, "Group hall passes aren't permitted at Hope High." So I wrote out six individual passes and sent them off again. This time, however, I decided to wait in the doorway until they passed the dragon's den. Even though my pupils were quiet lambs on that occasion, my colleague was vigilant and pounced upon them again. They shielded themselves behind six yellow passes, paused momentarily, then dashed to the stairwell as the dragon looked at me instead of his prey. I was persona non grata in the teacher's lounge from that day forth. But I'll give my colleagues this accolade—they unfailingly kept their disgruntlement with me and puzzlement about my methods to themselves. "He's a weird one," I once overheard a neighboring teacher say to a first-floor colleague whom I rarely encountered; but to my knowledge, no one ever gossiped to the principal or criticized me in front of the pupils.

The pupils—not me—called into question their assumptions about historical objectivity when several groups discovered conflicting explanations of the same event. That is, I don't recollect any conscious decision on my part to distribute various United States history textbooks to each group or to structure comparative readings. Within the same week, however, at least one group in each period presented evidence to their classmates that historians can differ in their narratives of the past. "Who's right," someone invariably asked. "Maybe they all are; maybe none of them are," I eventually replied, but all stuck to their doubts until we discussed a recent fight between two boys. "Is there a true account of the fight?" I asked. Half a dozen were articulated within five minutes, to which I added other possibilities. Although most of the pupils remained unconvinced that any story but the one they believed was the true one, the seed of historical relativism was planted—not by me, but by each other. So was a germinating reservation about authoritative statements. In their minds, both books and teachers were authorities; those who remained unconvinced by my statement that multiple explanations existed for every event were nonetheless troubled by the incontrovertible disagreement that their classmates had discovered in the textbooks. It was clearly a disconcerting experience for most of them; but it was also a challenge, and they rose to it with increasing enthusiasm. They wanted to think for themselves. They were ready to talk about Vietnam.

♦♦♦♦♦

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

Until then, I had studiously avoided the topic in class because I did not want to impose on the pupils my deepening reservations about United States military involvement in Southeast Asia. I was a fledgling arm-chair critic, not a rabble-rouser. It had never occurred to me that I would lose my student deferment when I withdrew from medical school in December 1965. I had applied to graduate schools in history for the coming academic year with unquestioned certitude that I would matriculate somewhere. Then came a notice to report for a physical examination. No problem, according to fellow students at Duke; the armed forces just want to know if any of us "college boys" are fit for reserve duty. Several weeks after my physical examination (a euphemism for legalized bodily assault), I spun the combination on my postal box and pulled out an envelope from my local draft board containing my reclassification from student status to 1A. No problem, said my buddies again; just send them a copy of your acceptance letter to graduate school.

I decided to bring it in person and found someone heading to the District of Columbia area with whom to share a ride. I had telephoned ahead for an appointment—an unnecessary precaution since there was no queue when I arrived. I thought a bit of small-talk might soften the steel-cold, bureaucratic demeanor of the gargantuan across the desk from me, but she impatiently snapped her fingers and pointed at the folder in my hands.

She glanced at my letter of acceptance from Yale University Graduate School, gave me back the folder, and said, "No graduate deferments, except in chemistry and physics; you should have stayed in med school."

"But, but , . . ." I stuttered before regaining some composure: "I have friends who have deferments to other graduate programs."

"Not from this draft board, sonny. Over 90 percent of boys graduating from high school in this district attend college, and I have a quota to fill. You've had your deferment. Expect to be called up any time. I'm busy! Goodbye."

The first draft notice reached me a month or so thereafter, but I ignored it. I was procrastinating, not rebelling; I had applied to the Naval Officer Candidate School program a few days after seeing the draft board official, and I was hoping for an alternative to the infantry. If external forces had taken charge of my destiny, why not saunter into a wardroom rather than dive for a foxhole? Fear had become a decisive factor as well; my reading of *The New York Times* suggested that I was more likely to survive at sea than in the jungle. After tossing away two more draft notices and becoming increasingly anxious about military police knocking on my dormitory door, I was nearly ecstatic upon my acceptance to Naval OCS.

Happiness, too, is relative. At the end of the summer, I moved to Rhode Island to await final orders to report for training in Newport. There were jobs in Providence, which was why I was teaching at Hope High School in the autumn of 1966—and reading about the enterprise that had disrupted my personal plans. Bernard Fall's books galvanized my inchoate skepticism about the official explanation—that Vietnam must not become another victim of international communist aggression—into conscious, personal opposition.[10] But my decision to use Fall as a challenge to classroom consensus on the veracity of the official version was not a conscious attempt at ideological conversion of high school seniors.

On the contrary, the idea came to me while mulling over a mundane, pedagogical problem: How could I animate (and perhaps, justify) the weekly current events sessions? What did the pupils learn from hassles with a parent over cutting articles from the morning newspaper (in the pre-pop tart era, when breakfast was more likely to be a familial activity than

today)? Those who were successful in this contest usually bored the rest of us with summaries of stories about which no one gave a tinker's damn. My inclination was to punt, but then I would violate district social studies policies; my tenure already felt too dicey to risk another confrontation. I asked a colleague if we were permitted to spread current events through the week, or whether I had to devote a discrete period to it each week.

"Nobody cares, as long as you do it—but you must be crazy to consider more than a day a week," was his response. The sub-text to my question was no more than a hunch. Since the pupils had found it challenging and enjoyable to compare textbook accounts of historical events, parallel exercises about contemporary events might elicit similar reactions.

I asked each pupil to choose one newspaper or magazine article about Vietnam and underline any phrases that dealt with the causes of the fighting; meanwhile, I boned up on Fall. At the designated session, we compiled a list of causal factors on the chalkboard. There was little variation among them. I read a few passages from the books I had brought with me, and wrote contradictory factors beside those extracted by the pupils. "Who is this guy, anyway?" someone invariably asked in each class. "What does he know about Vietnam or why the United States must stop communist aggression over there before it spreads to over here?" Were they certain it was that simple, I asked. Why were the Vietnamese divided into northern and southern countries? Why did the North Vietnamese leadership distrust the Chinese as much as the West? Nobody had answers but many were intrigued. So I promised to dig up material about imperialism and the French-Indochina War, whereas they agreed to look through a range of newspapers and magazines for stories about Vietnam for our next current events discussion. Thereafter, enough pupils in each class who made excursions to Brown University and the Providence public library reported to the rest on the varied accounts they had found to set in motion a host of spin-off topics that paralleled the analysis of contradictory accounts we had underway in the civics/history portion.

My announcement that I would not be returning as their teacher in January because of military service actually heightened my pupils' interest in the topic. For many of them, my departure personalized the impact of war. They asked questions about the draft, and it dawned on some of the boys that they might soon pass through the same pre-military rites of passage as I had. None of them, however, articulated the fear that I began to feel that December of 1966—not any longer about my own safety, but about what would surely happen to some of these boys whom I had grown to know and care for after several months together in the crucible of learning. Our collective study of Vietnam had transformed my own fear of death at an overseas posting into anger at United States policy and its lethal consequences for everyone concerned (although I was still a half-step from the resolute refusal to participate directly that complicated my months at O.C.S. and Supply Corps School). The mission that obsessed me during the last few weeks I taught at Hope High was to find ways to prevent my pupils from being duped about the glory and purpose of war. I pleaded with them to reflect on what participants in past wars have written, rather than listen to authority figures who sacrifice youth for purposes that all too often turn out to have been vainglorious, self-interested, and pointless. We compared Rupert Brooke's ardent poems on the eve of World War I with Wilfred Owen's grim portrayals of life and death in trench warfare. And then I was off—not to "the War College," as a student reporter wrote in the school newspaper, but to mind-numbing regimentation and regurgitative schooling that some military positivist must have modeled on the utilitarian vision of Gradgrind and M'Choakumchild.[11]

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

Three years later—one year in fact-grinding mills, nearly two as a "Pork Chop" on a reserve destroyer—I felt very much an outsider when I began graduate studies at Yale in January 1970. I was older than other first-year students, but on the other hand, I could never really close the gap between me and those who matriculated in my original class of 1966. Their concerns (finishing dissertations and finding jobs) were a distant future to me, and my experiences (truncated medical school and military service) made me an oddity to them. One afternoon in the spring of 1970, I met some of the older regulars for vending-machine coffee in the Law School lounge (Bill Clinton could have been at a neighboring table, for all I know). Since we frequently discussed each other's work, I read aloud a short passage from a memoir by a World War I participant. Then I started to talk about the parallel with my own feelings as a veteran and the desperation I had felt earlier to teach critical evaluation skills to my civics pupils. But I stopped when I realized that the other history graduate students did not comprehend the personal dimension of my story. They were not rude, and I was not resentful. Unless I intellectualized the topic, they could not relate to it. Tacitly, I have known since that day that Vietnam meant something different to academics whose lives were directly interrupted by it than to those who were more fortunate. But it took my departmental chairperson's suggestion, fifteen years later, to yank me into the realm of understanding that Vietnam was the primary matrix of my teaching philosophy.[12]

♦♦♦♦♦

Looking back at my initial semester as Baumer's graduate assistant, I can now see what was unclear to me then—that my experiences with the Hope High pupils primed me for evaluating historical essays as exercises in interpretation. But the format I began to develop with Baumer's blessing was derived from the historiography course I took from Jack Hexter my first semester at Yale. At the first meeting, Hexter passed out the packet of primary-source documents on the Goodwin-Fortescue controversy that I now use in my own history workshop. Hexter's instructions were laconic: "Interpret the events herein," tapping his fingers against a packet. I was still riveted on his long fingernails when someone asked what this assignment had to do with historiography. Mistake, I thought to myself. After dismissing the Herodotus-to-Hexter, "Varieties of History" approach to historiography (essentially, that mere exposure to ostensibly great historians does not teach an aspirant how to become one), Hexter dismissed us with a marching order to "do some history ourselves."

Did I listen to my inner voice or recall my own instructions to Hope High students about the relativity of history? Of course not. I was now in graduate school, and I was going to blow Hexter away with the range of my erudition on Elizabethan parliaments. Was I dissuaded by the fact that I knew virtually nothing about Tudor-Stuart history? Of course not. I had a couple of weeks to work up the context necessary to explain the minor controversy focused on in the packet. When I finished my first essay in graduate school, over half its fifteen pages was a review of the literature that eventuated in a speculative explanation of the actual controversy. I handed in the essay a couple of days early, pleased with my efforts and conclusions.

The three of us still enrolled in the course arrived early on the day Hexter promised to return our essays; the chap who had queried Hexter's methodology at the first meeting had not returned. Hexter arrived punctiliously (one of his trademarks, I was to learn). In addition to our individual essay, Hexter passed around a xerox copy of the first page of my paper, including his markings. He then proceeded to go through it line by line, first pointing out problems in my syntax and diction, then noting that there was no mention—let alone discussion—of the primary sources until the

second half of the essay (which surprised no one since we had exchanged copies of our essays). When I attempted to defend the significance of context, Hexter pulled his head into safety between his shoulders and waited me out. Then his head reemerged, his eyes glistened, and he returned to the task at hand—listing deficiencies in my essay. I took Hexter's cue and slumped into a defensive posture of my own. I was embarrassed. I felt picked on. But the most uncomfortable moment came when it dawned on me that every criticism was well-founded. So I stopped resisting this draught of bitters, served by a master craftsman who sincerely believed I needed such a potent constitutional so early in my training. Eventually, we moved on to the other papers, although in a more cursory fashion. "Everyone can apply to themselves what is relevant from my critique of Vinten-Johansen's paragraph," said Hexter. Thanks a lot, Jack, thought I. I had already vowed to write a revision that would satisfy "the tortoise"—his surreptitious nickname among the graduate students I knew. My view that evening was that "snapping turtle" was more fitting.

I kept doggedly to my quest of writing something that would evoke praise from Hexter, but I never succeeded. My revision was also unbalanced, but the mirror image of the original. This time, I painstakingly constructed a comprehensive narrative of the Goodwin-Fortescue controversy, providing little context and no interpretation. Fortunately, revisions were due after the last class meeting, so I was spared a communal evaluation. Had there been one, however, I would have been my harshest critic; while I had realized on my own that my approach was problematical, it came too late to correct it in this essay. Hexter would never see in my coursework the fruition of his pedagogical method, but I knew within myself that he had readied me for a transmutation. The act itself began when I became a grader in Baumer's intellectual history course, and it has continued to the present day—although Hexter's ex post facto teaching style and shock therapy are not congenial to my personality.

♦♦♦♦♦

My organization of the history workshop I teach at MSU is also influenced by Jack Hexter's reverence for the historical narratives written by Garrett Mattingly. This influence was very subtle, taking the form of an occasional reference that we were expected to follow up on our own when we found the time. It was after my course with Hexter that I came across his essays on "doing history," including a tribute to Mattingly.[13] At first I wondered why Hexter had not assigned us to read the pieces that were in print in 1970; but self-promotion is not his style, and thankfully so since his impact on me (at least) would be less had he hawked his own stuff. When I had some distance on my graduate experiences and the responsibility of developing my own historiography course, I returned to Hexter's essays, read again in Mattingly's writings, and decided to make hands-on training in writing narrative history the methodological objective of the course.

Since I was remiss in not stressing this objective more forcefully in my conversations with Bill McDiarmid, I will discuss it briefly here. When I first formulated a syllabus, the catalogue description for History 201 informed prospective students that they would be introduced to the work of one major historian, as well as a range of methodologies utilized by other practicing historians. My decision to stress narrative history does not entirely reflect personal experiences and research predilections; Lawrence Stone's essay on "The Revival of Narrative" made a case for its role in contemporary professional discourse.[14] I use Mattingly's book, *The Armada*, as the example of narrative history on which the students will model their own forays as interpreters of the past.[15] That is, I want them (as

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

Hexter had expected me) to "do" some history of their own, rather than focus their introduction to historiography on a study of what has already been done by professional historians. Given this objective, some may wonder if I undercut it from the outset by withholding the Goodwin-Fortescue documents packet until after the students have read *The Armada* and a counterpoint book.[16] My purpose is to force university students (as the Hope High pupils reminded me) to recognize that esteemed historians frequently offer contradictory approaches and interpretations of the same events—depending on the contexts in which they are writing, the perspectives they wish to reconstruct, and the sources they have chosen to use (or to which they are limited). The subtext for our discussion of "the Armada" enterprise is that historical interpretation differs from individual opinion; while opinions are simply proffered, interpretations are evaluated on the basis of how persuasively they explain the available evidence.

Once students understand that they are expected to model (rather than clone) Mattingly's method in their own research paper, we tackle Hexter's packet containing primary sources. Granted, this is an artificial research situation; among other things, students never struggle to find a topic that suits available resources. But limiting the topic to the Goodwin-Fortescue controversy and handing them their primary data provides a collective matrix and additional time to spend on the process involved in historical interpretation. If decidedly artificial, there is nothing formulaic about the process. The documents are simple transcriptions (with the exception of a few translations) of what one could find on the topic in a major research library; the students must cut up the packet and organize the material (chronologically and substantively) before they can begin to reconstruct what happened, why it happened, and decide if the controversy had historical significance. Internally, the documents are messy, often contradictory, and frequently puzzling. Often the Diarium notes of proceedings in the House of Commons differ, in tone and substance, from the smooth copy entered into the record titled *The Parliamentary or Constitutional History of England*. Recollections by the protagonists differ, as do comments by those further removed from the fray. The packet preserves the original diction (including Latin phraseology) and spellings.

Individually, the students are usually so overwhelmed after a first reading that they willingly submit to reorganization of the seminar into primary support groups (in which I attempt to balance learning styles, as evidenced in class discussion and the review essays). The first group task is to reach consensus on the chronological order of events; when each group of four students has put together a working calendar of what happened on what days, we work through any disagreements as a seminar. Problematic matters are noted as they emerge. Then we cluster related problems and uncertainties under discrete rubrics, and the primary groups assign one person to shuffle into temporary groups for resolving what is listed under each rubric. Such resolution frequently requires library research (about parliamentary procedures, legal terms, biographical data, et cetera), which each shuffle group organizes with advice from me. Meanwhile, the primary groups continue to function as the place to discuss each student's emerging narrative of the controversy. As more problematical issues emerge, existing shuffle groups manage those that fall into their bailiwicks; others may require the creation of a new shuffle group (although there is a limit to what can be managed in this fashion). Periodically, members of each shuffle group report to their primary groups on the material they have gathered; some issues are resolved, others cannot be—given constraints such as available time, extant resources, and limited expertise.[17]

While both primary and shuffle groups are geared to suggest the value of collective problem solving, the research paper (two or more drafts) provides each student opportunities to be a (his)storyteller. While there is no single,

"objectively true" explanation imbedded in the documents, each narrative must provide an interpretation of events, motives, and significance that is sustainable by the evidence available to the seminar as a collectivity. In future offerings, I intend to correct a past deficiency—the absence of a collective dimension in evaluating the narratives as they emerged from the group/seminar process. My experience in other classes is that students learn a great deal about their own writing when they are given opportunities to engage in constructive criticism of another student's writing. Henceforth, peer reviews will complement my comments on various drafts of the research papers.

♦♦♦♦♦

This long tangent that spun off my initial reading of Bill McDiarmid's evaluation of the history workshop has sufficently tried the patience of most readers to make me hesitate to launch another one about myself as an "idealist" historian. Bill's attempt at fixing me within an historical tradition is creative and often in the ballpark I might imagine for myself. But Bill's bench of veteran players often differs significantly from those on whom I consciously modeled myself. No matter. It is as important for my evaluator to clarify his own frame of reference (albeit through me) as it is for me to explain the genesis of mine. Moreover, Bill's major point in this section of his case study is indisputable—that all historians have their own stories which explain what they do, how they do it, and why they bother to do it at all.

If my story has relevance for anyone else, it may be as validation of the principle of historical contingency. Like every teacher, unexpected obstacles in my established pedagogical path have caused me considerable worry and confusion; change any significant obstacle or event on my "life's tape," and the outcome would have been significantly different from what I have narrated here.[18] For my attitudes about teaching and the methods I employ evolve from moments of uncertainty, as I sort out whether to continue what I have begun or to explore other pedagogical alternatives that suit my personality and sense of social responsibility.

Notes

1. G.Williamson McDiarmid, *Challenging Prospective Teachers' Understandings of History: An Examination of a Historiography Seminar*. (In this volume) East Lansing: Michigan State University, National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, 1993.

2. Since both men remain my closest friends (aside from my wife, Betty), who have already heard some—and shaped much—of what follows during our runs together, I mention their names without assuming agreement on every point: Richard White (now at the University of Washington) and Peter Levine (at Michigan State University).

3. Spring Semester, 1973: Modern European Intellectual History, part II (Eighteenth-Century Enlightenment to 1950).

4. Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art*, rev.ed. (New York: Vintage, 1967).

5. In the history workshop that Bill McDiarmid evaluated, I compressed into four weeks the gist of the structured writing assignments on the analytical essay that span an entire quarter in the intellectual history sequence. I dispensed with the ungraded diagnostic essay (to gauge where the students "are" as a preliminary to formulating the weekly assignments); instead, I summarized the model essay in establishing my expectations for the first writing assignment—an analytical book review. I evaluated these reviews as an initial effort at achieving my writing expectations and used comments (individually and in class) to focus attention on deficiencies that should be addressed on the second assignment—a comparative book review. While reading the first set of reviews, I felt that this particular class would be better served by a revision than anteing up to a comparative review. But I stuck to the syllabus, with the result that composing a comparative review created new problems instead of resolving structural deficiencies in their first essays. It was a catch-up situation from then on, at least with respect to teaching the rudiments of analytical writing. By the end of the course, only half of the students had made up for my misjudgment. I am still troubled by those I lost.

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

6. My first team-teaching occurred with Joseph Spielberg (Anthropology), in a course we developed to provide future teachers an interdisciplinary grounding in ethnohistory and global studies. Since 1986, I have taught an Overseas Study course, "Medical Ethics and History of Health Care in London," during five summers with Martin Benjamin (Philosophy), Howard Brody (Center for Ethics and Humanities in the Life Sciences), and Tom Tomlinson (also at the Center). I cannot overstate the constructive influence of such collegiality on my teaching methods and philosophy. When else does an instructor have occasion to rehash classroom activities with someone who has a parallel role but a different perspective on the material, the students, and the multiplicity of interactions that occurs in every session? In this context, I wish to acknowledge as well my indebtedness to Peter Levine, David LoRomer (History), and Richard White. David, Richard, and I met regularly for several years to discuss teaching strategies, recent articles and books, and other topics of interest to three junior faculty members. As running partners, Peter and I use each other as sounding boards and counselors on many matters, including teaching problematics.

7. Instructors of History 201 are expected to focus on the work of one major historian and introduce the students to contemporary varieties of historical methodology. My usage of the expression, historical workshop, reflects the influence of the late Steve Botein, for whom the workshop approach meant (in its strictest form) that all students read, discussed, and wrote essays on a common body of documents. There are, of course, other ways of structuring an historical workshop.

8. A couple of people who read an early draft of this essay assumed that I considered information dispensers synonymous with lecturers. Not necessarily. I know many instructors who combine a lecture style with process goals. I also know some instructors for whom an interactive approach is a means to elicit information on which students are later evaluated. In my view, the chief distinguishing characteristic of the two types is what an instructor wants done with the material covered in class, not how it is delivered or obtained. My view, therefore, acknowledges that there many instructors who share my goals without necessarily employing my techniques.

9. Don Juan says to the devil, "To be in Hell is to drift: to be in Heaven is to steer." George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*.(New York: Penguin, 1946 [1903]), 169.

10. Bernard B. Fall, *Street without Joy: Indochina at War, 1946-63*, 3rd rev. ed. (London: Pall Mall Press, 1963); *The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis*, rev. ed. (New York: Praeger, 1964); and *Vietnam Witness*, 1953-66 (New York: Praeger, 1966).

11. Charles Dickens, *Hard Times for These Times* (New York: Praeger, 1969 [1854]).

12. I cannot recall the memoir I was reading. This spring, however, I came across a parallel passage while preparing for a class discussion of Vera Brittain's memoir about "The Great War":

> After the first dismayed sense of isolation in an alien peace-time world, such rationality as I still possessed reasserted itself in a desire to understand how the whole calamity [WWI] had happened, to know why it had been possible for me and my contemporaries, through our own ignorance and others' ingenuity, to be used, hypnotised and slaughtered.

Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*. (New York: Penguin, 1989 [1933]), 471.

13. J. H. Hexter, *Doing History*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971); *Reappraisals in History. New Views on History and Society in Early Modern Europe*. (New York: Harper, 1961).

14. Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History," *Past and Present*. (1979, pp. 74-96).

15. Garrett Mattingly, *The Armada*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959).

16. My most recent counter to Mattingly was Felipe Fernandez-Armesto's *The Spanish Armada. The Experience of War in 1588* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

17. Common readings during this stage are designed to provide additional contextual explanation, as well as suggesting historical methodologies other than the narrative form. The workshop evaluated by Bill McDiarmid included the following: G. R. Elton, *England Under the Tudors*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1974) and Joyce Youings, *Sixteenth-Century England* (New York: Penguin, 1984). The shuffle groups first tried to resolve contextual and definitional problems by consulting these books, then looking in the library if they were unsuccessful.

18. Stephen Jay Gould, *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 51; I adapt Gould's expression for a species population to the life of an individual by joining it to the existentialist concept of "limit situations."

Adminstrative Staff

Co-Directors: Robert E. Floden
G. Williamson McDiarmid

Study Directors: Linda Anderson, Deborah Ball, Daniel Chazan, Helen Featherstone, Sharon Feiman-Nemser, Mary M. Kennedy, G. Williamson McDiarmid, Barbara Neufeld, Kenneth Zeichner

Director of Dissemination: Cassandra Book

Communication Specialist: Debra Peterson

Office Manager: Brenda Sprite

Publications: Tamara D. Hicks

NCRTL Special Report
November 1993

This *NCRTL Special Report* is published by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, College of Education, Michigan State University. The NCRTL is funded primarily by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position, policy, or endorsement of the Office or Department. Third-Class postage is paid at East Lansing, MI. ISSN 1054-7673.

Please send change of address notification to NCRTL Mailing List, 116 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1034. Please include the address label from this issue. Phone (517) 355-9302. Fax (517) 336-2795.

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity institution.

NCRTL

Michigan State University
National Center for Research
on Teacher Learning
College of Education
116 Erickson Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824-1034

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
East Lansing, Michigan
PERMIT NO. 21

© 1993 by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning